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A FRENCHMAN'S THOUGHTS ON THE WAR

A FRENCHMAN'S THOUGHTS ON THE WAR

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TO MY READERS

IT cannot be too often repeated : the real beauty of our efforts in the present conflict is that they constitute a revolt of the human conscience against Germanism.

I say the human conscience : not the conscience of this or that people, for in course of time, not among the Allies only, but throughout the whole world, every conscience which has not abdicated its rights, every conscience which is not the prisoner of material interests, or of prejudices which we will not examine, will be on our side.

We may be calm and patient. If Germany could only discern the spiritual factors in the lives of other peoples she would perceive the immense wave of indignation which is rising against her in certain countries which are politically neutral, but as determined as ourselves to become the implacable enemies of Germanism.

The German soldier is not merely the invader who desires to destroy our lives, our goods, our country. Like the Turk of yore, with whom he

has so many points of contact, he brings with him an entire civilization—or counter-civilization —which inspires us with horror.

Germanism is a perfectly coherent system, in which the words religion, science, and the ideal do not disappear, but become, as it were, labels applied by bureaucratic officials to various departments of the Imperial administration which is to rule and organize the world.

Before this ludicrous dream, which recalls the mentality of certain Oriental potentates who lived before the Christian era, we used to shrug our shoulders, unable to believe that the Germans would really seek to realize it. As for the books which appropriated to Germany the least Teutonic minds of humanity, or organized the Germanization of Christianity, we thought them examples of a sort of mystification which was in very poor taste, but which achieved a certain *succès de scandale.*

But no, it was serious. It was German science; it was the German literature which was honoured by Wilhelm II; it was the organization of German folly.

But although before the 1st of August 1914 the immense majority of Frenchmen had refused to take all this seriously, so puerile and incredible did it appear, they were forced on that day to

bow to the evidence. It was a revelation, indeed a double revelation, for in a moment, like St. George catching sight of the dragon, we saw the monster in all its horrible reality, and at the same time we became intuitively aware of what we are and what we are worth.

There was not a shadow of pride in this feeling, and all observers were struck by the quiet, serious, and reserved character of our mobilization. The folly and brutality of the Germans helped us clearly to see ourselves, and to feel the beauty of the ideal of peace, liberty, love, and sacrifice for the sake of others which we bore in our hearts, often without our knowledge.

We were slow to understand, but now we have seen. We know that Germanism, like those subtle poisons which penetrate all the tissues of the body, an intellectual error in the first place, progressively distorts the senses of those attainted by it, making them the frantic and perhaps irresponsible propagandists of what we are really forced to call a counter-morality and an anti-civilization.

Words have not the same meaning for them as for us. How should we make them grasp the fact that the enthusiasm of our troops comes not from a savage desire to kill all the Germans in order to take their place at a gigantic banquet, but, on the contrary, from our terror lest we should resemble

them, or be tempted to render to our country the kind of worship which they render to theirs? How should they understand that more than one of our humble hillmen of the Cevennes set out with a joy in his heart such as he had never known, because he knew that should he fall on the field of battle he would die for a cause which is not only the cause of France and of the enemies of Germany, but also, to a certain extent, the cause of German liberty?

Quite suddenly these thoughts irradiated our hearts, not as a miraculous or unexpected light, but as truths which we had not previously been able to perceive so plainly, yet which were fortified by the labours of the past centuries. Thenceforth we could no longer lose sight of them.

These ideas have given this war a novel and unique character; and it is by considering them continually that we shall see them grow more potent and more evident, and shall daily grow more faithful to the tacit promise which we made ourselves in the August of 1914, and more capable of realizing the hopes that we have aroused.

For a year now we have not failed in our duty and our need to meditate over our programme, so that we may continually discover its applications and its consequences.

I naturally do not profess to have been able to read all those examinations of conscience which have been published. But among those which I have been able to read there is one, written in precise and sober language, which relates with a rare delicacy that which has been passing in our minds.

These pages, which form a true historic and philosophic document, are the work of M. Camille Jullian, member of the Institute and professor in the College of France. They were published under the title *Le Sentiment Français* in the *Journal des Débats* of the 1st of August 1915.

Reading these pages, I could not help thinking of the lectures which I had prepared to be given in London, which dealt with the same subject, but were so cruelly inferior.

Should I send a copy of M. Jullian's article for each of my intending auditors, and beg to be excused ?

I could not make up my mind to do that. But thanks to the kindness of M. Jullian, who generously authorized the translation of his article, I can to-day offer it to my English friends.

M. de Nalèche, director of the *Journal des Débats*, has with equal generosity acceded to my request. I take this opportunity of expressing my lively gratitude, which will, I am sure, be shared by my readers.

Of these latter, those who have had the opportunity to travel in France since the outbreak of the war will find in M. Jullian's article ideas which they have already encountered, but expressed with greater exactness and reality and truth; somewhat as when one compares a number of photographs taken at the same time, from the same point of view, and one among them, in its superiority, wrings from us an exclamation of surprise.

One of the least known qualities of the French character is a certain shame or modesty which prevents us from expressing our deepest feelings. Is it a fault or a virtue? I do not know. But this is certain: people are very often mistaken in their views of us and our ideas, our tendencies, our convictions, because this innate modesty is overlooked.

M. Jullian had not to overcome this difficulty. His special studies have made him of all men of our generation one of those most familiar with the thought and tradition of his country. And he was fully prepared to explain all that lies deepest in the French mind of to-day, for what we are thinking and willing is nothing new, but has been prepared by a history that extends over many centuries.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE WAR

CHAPTER I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE WAR

To the soldiers of the Entente—The gratitude of France toward Great Britain—The mental condition of the French people on the outbreak of the war—The pacifism of the French—Conversation with certain school-teachers in June 1914—The mobilization of the conscience against Germany—The letter of a schoolmaster, 1 August 1914—The lack of eagerness to learn the news during the first days of the war—"England is coming in!"—How the moral aspect of the British assistance was that chiefly regarded—The meaning of the expression *Entente Cordiale*—Scholarship and history—Frequency of religious expressions in these chapters—A speech by M. Viviani.

IT is not without diffidence that I take up my pen to-day: for, if at ordinary times it is a difficult thing to address the public, the task becomes formidable at such a moment as this, a moment of crisis, when the mind of the whole world is labouring.

Instinctively we walk on tip-toe: we lower our voices and say but little when we enter a house where a child is about to be born. Now, to-day, it is more than a child that is about to see the

light: a whole civilization is on the point of entering life. And we are not merely the spectators of this mystery: it is being realized in each one of us, and by means of each. If to our soldiers at the front, to whom I send my heartfelt greetings—unconquered Sikhs or Montenegrins, Belgians crowned with thorns and bearing the cross, sacrificing themselves for others, and ascending, like the Christs of a new age, the stations of a new Calvary—beside which we see a tomb which shall not, any more than did that tomb of old, retain its victory—Russians, surging forward in deep masses of humanity, the first article of their creed the liberation of Poland—English, Scots, Irish, Canadians, Australians, Hindus, and all those members of that British Empire on which the sun never sets, who by their presence in our trenches involuntarily make us dream of the realization of some vision seen by a poet or a prophet of Israel: Frenchmen, sons of the Revolution and of the Crusades, marching hand in hand with their brothers, the Arabs and the negroes of Congo and the Sudan—and the children of generous, noble Italy, about to realize the dream of liberty, glory, and progress dreamed of by Garibaldi: and all you soldiers who fight so heroically yet so simply in the trenches of Belgium, Flanders, the Argonne, Champagne, and Lorraine, or on the slopes of the Vosges, or yonder on the Vistula, amid the

Alps, or by the Dardanelles—and you, sailors, who watch over the seas—if to you has fallen the more glorious part of the task to be achieved, yet our part—the part of the rearguard, the reserves who are left at home, who provide you with munitions of war, and also give you energy and joy and comfort—our part is no less necessary, no less decisive.

And in this hour—when Europe, and one might almost say the world in its entirety, is absorbed in one and the same task, when each man must be forever at his post—there is no time for many words. It is the hour of action, not of speech.

However, the Municipal Council of your Metropolis was of opinion that if we are to collect our thoughts, if we are to avoid a waste and a dispersal of our efforts and our attention, it will be well for us to meet in order to listen to talks and discussions of a very simple nature, in which our hearts will say more than our lips, and in which, by bringing our better selves to a common fund, we may give one another strength, and may find, in the view of the long, difficult road we have yet to cover, the most precious kind of encouragement.

So I have accepted its invitation with very great pleasure—the pleasure of a child about to set forth on a journey, the joy of an old man amazed to find that people still think him of some sort of use, and

above all the joy of gratitude. For a long time I have been accustomed to turn towards Great Britain as the country whose gates, whose purses and whose hearts open most readily and most completely. It was you British who provided me, twelve years ago, with the means of organizing school canteens in the country of St. Francis. And you constitute the brightest—I had almost said the only jewel—in the crown of the International Society of Franciscan Studies; and four years ago the whole population of the city of Assisi was acclaiming the memory of one of your compatriots, Miss Lord, cut off in the flower of her age by an implacable disease, and who, before she left us forever, remembered the little Umbrian city and made mention of it in her last will and testament.

From these instances—particular and perhaps episodic—I will proceed to a more general statement. Each people has its defects and its qualities. In my relations, already long-established, with your citizens, what has always chiefly impressed me is a frankness and uprightness, which among you are general, but elsewhere are by no means so usual; a transparency of mind and heart which is reflected in the beautiful eyes of your old men—often as bright, as gay, I am tempted to say as radiant with life and love, as those of your youths and maidens.

For this reason you are less circumspect than the peoples of other races, and I am inclined to think that in diplomatic discussions your representatives must sometimes find themselves rather helpless before those of the little Turk who reigns in Constantinople, or the Great Turk who lords it in Berlin.

We admire these British qualities. We envy them, and we hope that by dint of congratulating you on their possession, and of thanking you for possessing them, we may strengthen them in you, and, in course of time, discover their increase in our own hearts.

You possess another characteristic akin to these, and no less precious, under present conditions, for the future of Europe; but it is not easy to define it; it is the constant marriage, in your minds, of the real and the ideal. You see the ideal in the real, and the real in the ideal. The idealism which spends itself in words, creating nothing, you despise. If, in the day's work, you encounter a magnificent orator who soars heavenward with all the assurance of a consummate aviator, you applaud him with all your hearts, but when he comes to earth again you ask him: Where have you been? Where do you seek to lead us?

You ask that the fair tree shall bear sweet fruit. But now all these reasons for gratitude—to which

I might add many more—have of a sudden been swept away like a drop of water in the irresistible tide of France's gratitude towards your country.

It would need the dramatic pen of a Shakespeare to describe all that passed through the minds of Frenchmen on the 31st of July and the first days of August 1914; and I do not believe we shall ever see the historian equal to the height of that argument. It was all too sudden, too profound, too complex! If in the heart of each of us there are gulfs of joy and sorrow which we can barely skirt, and on which we only on rare occasions cast a furtive glance; and if poetry and music are powerless to represent these backwaters of the individual hopes and passions, how can our spoken languages, whose age is only a few centuries, express the new feelings and ideas that are moving Europe?

At the moment when the spectre of war appeared on the horizon of our country there was, as it were, a cataclysm in men's minds; a cataclysm foreseen, and in a certain degree prepared for by Germany —yet she had utterly deceived herself as to its result.

For France—and when I say France I mean above all the people, the people that works far from Paris, in the fields and factories—a people given to a certain simplicity of life, and incurably addicted to judge others by itself — this people desired

peace and believed in peace. It believed in it, it desired it, perhaps with the simpler and the less experienced impulses of its heart, but also with the noblest. Peace was its religion, and I am far from blaming it for that. Its mistake was to suppose that this religion was universal, and to turn a deaf ear and an unseeing eye to those who sought to persuade it that the King of Prussia and his subjects most certainly had another.

The principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man have penetrated France more profoundly than is realized. It is a creed which few know by heart, yet it seems to form part of the sub-consciousness of my fellow-countrymen. It is certain that the majority of our peasants have given no particular thought to the Christian and philosophic dogma of "the eminent dignity of the human person," yet it is this "act of confidence," firstly in the individual soul, then in the collective soul, which is, at the present moment, the very foundation of the political mentality of the French people. Hence those tendencies which you may, according to your humour, qualify as foolish optimism, or pernicious and unpardonable illusions; in which you may perceive, too, by regarding them from a slightly different standpoint, the triumphant and creative faith which outstrips time, ignores obstacles, and moves mountains; that love which believes all things and

hopes all things; that force which acts unsleepingly in creation; which has been more than once overthrown, but which has not yet won its last victory; and which, if we can only succeed in being what we ought to be, will presently achieve one of its most glorious triumphs.

That there was, in the early months of the year 1914, an altar raised, in the hearts of the majority of Frenchmen, to this religion, is readily proved by the journals which are read by the masses of the people; but in the language of our lesser "dailies" there is often something factitious and superficial. They seem at times to make it their business to warn their readers that their language is in the taste of the day, ephemeral as the fashion, or a Ministry.

The popular mind does not possess this agility or this opportunism. It is all of a piece. It desired peace, not because some clever gentlemen, who were more or less Parisians, or a few important officials, had spoken or written fine things about peace, but because of mental operations whose beginning lay far back in the centuries which had led it to the conviction that war is an ineffectual and untrustworthy solution of international conflicts.

I have been aware of this attitude for many years, but I perceived it more and more plainly as the war threatened us more closely. In the month of June

last year, for example, I happened to find myself in company with some schoolmasters and schoolmistresses of the neighbourhood. I have known them a long time, and I know, from the occasional examinations of their pupils, what magnificent pedagogic results many of them have achieved. And, what is more, I see and feel their beneficent influence on the country, and its morals, particularly in the matter of temperance propaganda. There are those among them who deserve more than esteem: they deserve admiration for the high conception which they hold of their functions, and the devotion with which they fulfil them. Our mutual relations are full of simple good feeling. They know I am utterly a stranger to the quarrels of the local parties, and even to those of the national parties; they know that under my roof you may meet, at the same time, "Blacks" and "Whites," Catholics and Protestants, Jews and freethinkers. At our previous meetings the conversation had been of the highest interest, owing to the keenness of discussion, the liberty of speech, the ready wit, the unexpected ideas presented. From the clash of ideas arose not merely light, but warmth and sympathy.

But this time it was no longer the same; during lunch the conversation turned on the question of war—it was, I remember, in June 1914—and I saw

at once that all those present believed immovably in peace. Now a few months earlier I had been in Alsace—in Strasbourg—at the time of the incredible "affair" of Sabern, of which the London *Times* gave an account which is an historic document—a true preface and foretaste of that which the spirit of Germanic militarism was preparing for Europe. And I had come away with the impression that war was thenceforth inevitable, and that it would be unchained by Germany, who was only awaiting the most favourable moment for the sudden attack which was to shatter us before we could collect ourselves.

I had then in my pocket a document which fortunately is in no way secret, and which affords a proof of the impudent manner in which our enemies made ready. This was the extraordinarily strict inquiry-form sent to every inhabitant of the Empire with a view to the imposition of a single war-tax.

You will perhaps imagine that armed with such a document I found it easy to persuade my friends that a journey beyond our frontiers would have revealed to them a singularly disturbing condition of affairs? By no means!

My friends regarded me with mixed feelings. Some, no doubt, were inclined to pity me, as having grown too old for certain ideas: but not one for a moment imagined that I might be not

utterly mistaken! They suddenly grew embarrassed, uncomfortable, depressed, and the eyes of a few schoolmistresses wore a scandalized expression. I had wounded their faith!

This state of mind represented the great bulk of public opinion in France on the eve of the war. And you must always remember this, if you would understand what has happened since and will in future happen.

The Prussian Staff had foreseen everything on the material side; in its plans of mobilization it had organized everything, down to the least detail; but it forgot to allow for spiritual factors, for the powers of moral reaction. And the German declaration of war provoked in France perhaps the most tragic emotion that has ever thrilled the human heart. Of this the journals have said nothing—at all events, in France—the subject was too delicate. When a volcano bursts into eruption in the meadow in which you were singing a ballad of the future, you do not think about watching yourself. Yet it was in the surprise of this first hour, in the thrill of horror which Germany evoked, with her Emperor, her ministers, her generals, her scientists, her bishops, pastors and professors, that the vital germ of the whole war resided.

"The wicked worketh a deceitful work," say the Scriptures; and it assuredly seems that these

consoling words may once again prove true. The unloosing of this war, for which the German people had been living for forty-four years, towards which it had directed its astonishing capacity of submissiveness and discipline, for which it had worked and organized, not only at home and in the midst of its allies, but in neutral countries, in the air, on the sea, and under the sea—the unloosing of this war, by its sudden revelation of crime, produced a reaction in the mind of the French people, and, almost as immediately, in the minds of the other peoples of Europe, which was the direct opposite of the effect which our enemies had expected and relied on. The consciences of the world were mobilized against Germany. It was, for her, a defeat, even before the armies had met in order of battle; and from this initial defeat she will not recover. She had calculated everything for the crushing and shattering of her adversaries; for the evocation of such terror in the very soul of the spectators that it would never occur to them to utter a word or to make a sign; but this crushing and shattering of Germany's enemies did not take place! In another six months, in another year, the degree of true civilization which a nation has attained will be measured by the depth of its reprobation of Germany. Yet a few months longer, and Germany,

defeated on the battlefields as in all the gently nurtured minds of the entire human race, will no longer have even the supreme consolation of crying : "All is lost save honour!" Yet a few months longer, perhaps a few years, and if there are Governments so ill inspired as to say to their peoples : "Your minds are filled with indignation against Germany ; but keep your indignation to yourselves, seal your lips and close your eyes and cover your ears. The morality of nations is not the morality of individuals. Our interests must be put before all else" —if there are such Governments, if they speak such words, they will quickly expiate their crime, for the peoples will avenge themselves for being thus depreciated.

I will return to France. What was happening there ?

The too candid idealists of whom I spoke but now went through an atrocious time, an hour of moral agony infinitely harder to bear than death, for death is the end of suffering, and the trial which was imposed on them was that of a new life to be lived, at the moment when it seemed to them that the light which had hitherto served them was suddenly failing.

To possess an ideal of peace, which one has valiantly defended : to have believed in its proxi-

mate realization, and then to awake to the horrors of a war unexampled in history—a war that nothing in the world could avert—is this not one of the most terrible trials a man can suffer? To these millions of Frenchmen, who had lived in a generous, humanitarian dream, it seemed that all things were crumbling, around them and within them. Yet they could not say: "We were wrong, we have sinned against the light"; for the ideal of peace foreseen by the prophets and established by Jesus of Nazareth remains what it is, and, if they saw it withdrawn from them, perhaps it seemed to them to burn with a new splendour, and to demand from them a kind of sacrifice of which they had not dreamed. A school-teacher wrote to me on the 1st of August: "People should not keep on reminding me of 1870 *à propos* of 1914; the situation is so different! In 1870 many of the faults were on our side; our soldiers set out courageously in defence of their country. This time they have set out with the conviction that they are serving their country, no doubt, but they are still more serving the most sacred rights of humanity. No one can doubt as to the possible or probable issue of the conflict. The match is too unequal. But what is the use of thinking about it so much? The struggle was always unequal between the tyrants and the liberators; and the liberators, in the end,

have always been the victors. I wish I were a poet, so that I could write, before setting out, a masterpiece dedicated to the Germans, thanking them for having brought back the age of the martyrs. I always used to picture to myself the atrocities of war, and now I see it as providing commonplace men like myself with the occasion, not so much of performing brilliant actions, as of dying in creating something, of which I am certain, although I see it incompletely. To fall under some pine-tree in the Vosges, to die without any knowing of it, appears to me as an act of life which cannot be in vain. Perhaps they will *kill* us all. They will murder France. Yet I cannot help believing that we are already victorious. They say that those condemned to death, at the moment of their execution, see as though foreshortened all their lives passing before their eyes. Last night I was rather like them. I saw the whole of my life at home: the old house, its nooks and corners, its furniture, the folk and the beasts, and the village too, with its cries, its smells, and the old pastor, who was such a frightful bore, yet such an original. I saw myself standing before him at my catechism, one day when he had told us to learn about the Devil, and the energy with which he makes war upon God, and I saw the ray of beauty which transfigured him when he replied, to some urchin's question: 'God cannot

be vanquished and the Devil is His servant.' I did not understand, then, what he meant, and I do not understand it yet, but the words have stayed with me, and involuntarily I apply them to the present situation." This overflow of emotion is peculiarly chaotic; it is rife, perhaps, with contradictions and illogical arguments. The living reality is rarely shaped to the chalk-line, like the alleys of a French garden. Yet it seems to me to correspond faithfully to what was felt by France on the 31st of July of 1914.

The incomparable fervour with which these pacifists of the day before set out for the front knew no exceptions; and only a very superficial observer could imagine that here was a kind of conversion, and that they were ready to burn what they had yesterday adored. What was it that had crumbled and crashed to earth before their eyes? Not their ideal—but Germany: the intellectual worth, the moral credit of that country. It did not suddenly occur to them to become militarists because their pacific hopes had suffered a most brutal check; no more than it occurs to us to turn thieves when we see others make an easy living by theft, and even achieve honours and a kind of public consideration.

There is a very clear and interesting example of all that I have been trying to describe in the person

and the journal of Gustave Hervé: *La Guerre Sociale.* The file of this daily paper is of the greatest interest; it is one of the three or four which will best help us to grasp the history of the ideas and the feelings of the French people during the past year.

But if we wish to understand the mental currents which are shaping themselves in France at this moment, and the events which are preparing, we must be careful to distinguish fine shades of thought and feeling; for, if I am not mistaken, the spiritual factors will make themselves more and more felt; the most secret negotiations of the diplomatists will have to leave the windows open toward public opinion, will have to recall the ancient saying: *Vox populi, vox Dei.*

It is true that certain violent actions are committed, which we must not—simply because they are the work of a mob of people who fill the streets with their shouting—describe as expressions of public opinion. At the same time we must not forget that the simple and lowly of this world, less involved than others in national preoccupations, have also a voice in the chapter. There are heights upon which they breathe more easily, and whence, like the look-out man on a ship, they can give warning of dangers unsuspected by the ordinary voyager.

Have we not lately seen the enlightened public

opinion of Italy forestalling the work of its Government, and giving, in proportion to the sanction it bestowed, an effectiveness unexampled in the past? You know that wherever there is an Italian his heart has beat in unison with all the hearts of his mother-country, and has achieved a solidarity of hope and purpose and faith—the faith of his king as of the humblest of his fellow-citizens; he has experienced emotions unknown to him before, and has accepted duties which do not shrink from self-sacrifice; and this enthusiastic union of wills has already, as it were, created a new Italy.

If I have succeeded in expressing myself clearly you will have understood something of the sadness of the majority of Frenchmen at the moment when war was declared, and of their spiritual exaltation. I was struck immediately by the lack of animation with which our people sought the news of the day, and I was even tempted to attribute it to indifference, whereas it was really and fundamentally a degree of idealism which is rarely attained. Without thinking about the matter and probably without being conscious of it, our peasants did as do those monks who, possessed by a single thought, die to all things else that they may live only for that idea.

"What is the good of knowing what is happening?" a poor woman whom I met in the street once asked me. She added: "Our duty is plain!" And I watched her go her way, with an indescribable air of pride and affliction, and I seemed to behold France herself, clad in the mourning of her untimely illusions. We did not want to hear the news because we were afraid to hear it.

We had, alas! only too many reasons for being pessimistic. Later on I shall tell you of the first two days of mobilization, and the wonderful and inspiring spectacle which they presented, but the horizon was too black to permit one the courage to enjoy the beauty of what was going on around us. . . . Suddenly on the 5th of August a messenger reached the little village, shouting: "England is coming in! England is coming in with us!" Never have I seen so great a joy reflected on human faces. It did not find expression in shouting or processions, but when people were assured that the news was really authentic, those who were present gazed at one another without speaking; they all had tears in their eyes. Finally an old man said: "I feel that I can breathe again," and that phrase, in the local dialect, means that one can once more breathe freely, and that one feels once more that there is a reason for living.

Scenes of the same kind were taking place all over France, and even on the day when peace is signed, even if it is the peace we hope for, I am not sure that we shall experience a feeling of joy so full and so complete as that which we experienced on the day of which I am speaking. And this we owe to you, our dear English friends.

I should like to express myself more fully on this point. It will not be a loss of time, for in considering the joy of France at the news of your intervention, we shall be able to examine more closely the part played by the spiritual factors in this war, and the path which we must henceforth follow will seem to us, if not more easy, at least more definite, more full of radiant promise.

I am very proud of my compatriots, the peasants of the Cevennes; they possess a natural culture whose secret I have yet to fathom. They have only our primary schools, which the children attend, anything but regularly, until they are twelve years of age. And that is all. How is it, then, that children so slenderly equipped with knowledge grow up, for the most part, into young people possessing a certain indefinable modesty and sobriety, yet in whom we discover a soundness and rectitude of judgment which are, as a

rule, the fruit of years or a wide experience of mankind? Although they are extremely industrious, attending chiefly to the cultivation of their fields, they cannot be accused of preoccupation with material questions only; it is true they do not speak willingly of religious matters, but one feels that their thoughts are bathed in an atmosphere of instinctive idealism.

I had never felt all this so keenly as on the 5th of August last year; the joy felt in France that day was a joy of the rarest kind, a moral joy. I was trying to tell you, a moment ago, of the suffering inflicted on our population by the brutal behaviour of Germany, which was rendered still more horrible by the hypocrisy of the language in which it was dressed up. Now, on the day I speak of, and ever since, what the people of France accepted with the joy of resurrection was the moral aid of England; the idea that France is no longer alone: that the nation which she has for a long time most respected, as an elder sister whom she admires, while envying certain of her qualities, has become one with us and follows the same ideal.

Later, we remembered the material help which you are giving us, your heavy guns, your mastery of the sea, your troops, so splendidly equipped: the good humour, the robust health of your

soldiers, and, above all, the magnificent impulse of voluntary enlistment; but all this was, in a sense, subsidiary. The moral value of your action, rapid yet deliberate as it was, infinitely surpassed all the rest. It gave us back our *joie de vivre*, the joy of faith in the future, because you share that faith with us.

Not long ago, when the foundation of the Entente Cordiale between France and the United Kingdom was being laid, there were politicians in foreign countries who criticized the adoption of this vague and elastic phrase, which was far from possessing the preciseness which as a rule enables the contracting parties to anticipate unpleasant surprises. They gently smiled at these Frenchmen and Englishmen, who were simple enough to trust one another. But the adoption of this phrase marked more than the beginning of a new period in the relations of our two countries; it was characteristic of a new political morality, a living union based on reciprocal confidence and respect.

The train of events released by the Germans afforded the Entente a wonderful opportunity of proving its magnificent efficacy, and it will prove it again in the future, often in unexpected directions.

Henceforth, when you travel through the

French country-side, you must not be surprised if you notice that the eyes of our schoolchildren linger when they fall upon you. Perhaps you will feel in them—and you will not be mistaken if you do—the naïve caress of respect and admiration with which they greet those whom they most love. Aged men, who will regret that they no longer have young eyes to see you with, will raise their shabby Phrygian bonnets; and then, perhaps, you will understand what your country has meant to mine.

Graciously invited to address you, I could not resist the desire to be the diffident precursor of these children and these aged men. Perhaps I was wrong, for I am no orator, and I shall have nothing to say to you that you do not know already, nothing that I have not found to be excellently expressed by your statesmen and your leading newspapers: but I know, by long experience, what English hospitality is: I mean the hospitality of your homes as well as that of your hearts. It will not displease you to hear expressed in the words of a foreigner the ideas which you have often expressed in your own tongue. I do not know if this is due merely to courtesy, or whether it is due to a sort of mystic delight in hearing your own ideal praised in another language.

However that may be, there was another lesser consideration which decided me to accept the tempting invitation: which is the fact that I am one of those very rare Frenchmen who are not Parisians. And it seems to me that the Parisians, at the present moment, are the least qualified of my countrymen to perceive what is happening. Exhausted by the perpetual influx of news, assailed by details, overwhelmed, without possibility of escape, by all kinds of business, they become the victims of a process of attrition and subdivision, and, if we except those who react against this process, it is just to say that a highly trained critical faculty, or, if you prefer, the capacity of judicious discernment, is rarer in Paris than in the depth of the provinces.

I have been asked to tell you of the France of to-day. I shall do so all the more gladly in that the events which are unfolding themselves before our eyes are, properly speaking, historical. The relation of them is history, not merely an ephemeral chronicle; and if they are not recorded now, the time will very soon come when it will no longer be possible to reconstitute them in their living reality. We shall only be able to see them distorted by the events which succeed them. If it so happens that you have made a few notes since the outbreak of the war, you will, I am sure,

be surprised to find how largely all that has happened since then has modified the relative importance of facts in your mind: and when you come to realize the discrepancy which even in this short lapse of time has come into being between your memory and your original impression, you will see that unless we endeavour, day by day, to record the true physiognomy of the facts, it will be impossible for us to recover it later.

What I want to give you now is not a panegyric of France. Many such have been uttered in London; even in the columns of the *Times* I have found several—for instance, that of Mr. Clutton Brock; and quite recently the letters of an Oxford correspondent entitled "The Queen of Nations."

We have been touched by these: for, even though we regarded them in the light of homage paid to that which we would be rather than to that which we are, we found in them encouragement and comfort.

But since I cannot attempt to give you an analytical history of all that is happening on the other side of the Channel, I wish to select and to set before you a few particularly important and easily apprehended characteristics.

The facts which are evolving before our eyes present, as do the facts of other domains, two

aspects: the material and the spiritual, and the aspect which history must especially record is the spiritual. For the spiritual aspect of life is the peculiar province of history.

Scholarship is to a great extent right in searching for the precise and well verified fact; but there is a kind of scholarship which is, we might say, inspired by materialism, and which, while it claims to be based on reality, is really only a photograph, distinctly partial and wholly deceptive, as are so many exact photographs. They are not "faked," yet they are incapable of giving a true idea of the reality.

The expression "fully documented" often deludes the public. For the scholar, a fact is "fully documented" when he has all the documents which refer to the subject in question. The historian goes much further than this; he asks himself whether all the documents exist which are necessary to throw light on the subject.

Suppose, for example, that some one attempted to draw up a complete and verified list of all the attempts against the law of nations of which our enemies have been guilty. Do you suppose that this catalogue, even were it carefully made, would be history? It would only be tabulated matter which would give a very imperfect idea of the reality.

The history of the German atrocities is not merely this. It consists above all of the state of mind which paved the way for them, systematized them, coldly foresaw them, and finally adopted them without a revolt of conscience, without a cry of instinctive protest.

It is certainly well to know, by means of a few examples, that there is no discrepancy between theory and practice, and that those whom we may call the masters and doctors of German militarism are not sinister prophets crying in the wilderness, out of touch with the people and the army. No; the theorists of terrorism, the poets of violence and hatred, the professors with the minds of priests and troopers, form the true inspiration of the German Army. Their books constitute the theory which the army strives to put into practice. It is enough to read them to know the enemy we have to deal with. It is useless to soil our minds with the repulsive pictures of the atrocities which their mentality has engendered.

And it is the same with France. If we wish to know France and to understand her, it is obviously necessary to examine in some detail the facts which can be observed in the observer's immediate vicinity, but above all we ought to seek to distinguish the main determining lines, and to select, from the enormous mass of facts, those which bear

within them a kind of fruitful germ: those which have a bearing on the future.

Perhaps my readers will be surprised by the superabundance of religious terms of which I make use. I do so because the events in whose midst we are living are essentially religious. It is curious to observe how those French newspapers which are most utterly removed from any ecclesiastic influence are now swarming with religious phrases—employing them almost as plentifully as do the sermons of our orators of the pulpit. It is instinctive; and to resist this tendency would call for an effort which would distort the facts. M. Viviani, our present Prime Minister, on the 8th of November 1906, employed a phrase in the Chamber of Deputies which has become famous. "With one magnificent gesture," he said, "we have extinguished lights in the heavens which will not be rekindled!" And since that day the people of Paris, a people loving laughter and not without a literary sense, recalling an English novel which is popular in France, have nicknamed the Southern orator "The Lamp-Extinguisher."[1] It is curious and interesting to note that on the 15th of last April

[1] The French call the lamplighter the lamp-*extinguisher*. The Parisian *ouvrier*, going to work in the early dawn, would observe the later portion of his duties. "The Lamplighter" is, of course, the book referred to.—(B. M.)

the same speaker addressed to a gathering of convalescent wounded soldiers in the great hall of the Trocadéro a speech literally impregnated with religious feeling. The lights have been rekindled, if not in the heavens, at least—and this is better—in our hearts, and M. Viviani has largely contributed to the work.

His speech was read *in extenso* in a little church among our Ardèche mountains, in place of the sermon, on the Sunday following its delivery, and no one thought of being surprised. I wish I could give it in full here: at least I will complete this chapter by quoting a portion of it:—

"You have all given the country a magnificent gift—the gift of your courage and your suffering. Why? Why have all these heroes—and in speaking of them I am speaking of you—why have all these heroes given, why are they giving, more than life itself, in this impulse of mystic heroism whose greatness consists in its modesty? Do they look to receive the reward that close-fisted Fame so tardily pays to the memory of the departed? They know that the marble pedestal awaits only a few privileged beings. They know that glory will not shed its light upon each and all. They know that their sacrifices will be anonymous, veiled in mystery, that if they fall their death will as a rule be unknown save to

those immediately about them. They know this. But they also know that life is not the supreme good, that for man the supreme good is honour, and for a nation independence. They know that by their deeds the generations which will arise under the sun to-morrow will be freed from suffering and servitude. They know that because of them their country will to-morrow muster all her children upon her augmented territory. And they set forth, their gaze fixed upon the glorious image which rises in the future."

Hearing these words, there are perhaps those of you who have thought: What a strange alteration has France undergone! No, France has not changed: she has simply returned to her better self; she has recovered her old ardent faith, the faith which she has expressed in many and various creeds; various but not opposed; or rather opposed only in the eyes of those who do not plumb the depths of things, who see the letter rather than the spirit; she has recovered her ancient faith, a faith always the same yet always new, continually more potent, more fruitful: a faith which in the Middle Ages called forth the words: *Gesta Dei per Francos.*

THE MOBILIZATION

CHAPTER II

THE MOBILIZATION

The singing of a hymn in a public place in Berlin—Germany, who was prepared for everything, never foresaw the immediate moral result of her attack—Germany's admiration for Napoleon I—Can the Germans say, in favour of their cause, what we can say in favour of ours?—The declaration of war created, in France, a national state of mind—The spectacle presented by the country shortly before the war—France "in a mess"—The elections of 1914; alcoholism; political animosities—The mobilization in the mountains of the Cevennes.

IN my last chapter I tried to give you some idea of the general atmosphere in which we in France are living. Before entering into rather more circumstantial detail, I must first of all make a confession. I must admit that I was not long ago a false prophet. In a work published a few years ago under the title "The Religious Tendencies of Modern France,"[1] a book which was translated into English, and which one malicious Englishman described, not without some justification, as a representation of the "Irreligious Tendencies of

[1] *L'Orientation religieuse de la France d'aujourd'hui.*

Modern France" [1]—in this book, I say, I expressed a desire for peace, not merely because I loved peace for its own sake, but because of a desire, at once scientific and (it may be) slightly egoistical, that the evolution of my country towards a new intellectual, moral, and social period should take place quietly, without any shock or upheaval, and should attain its goal under the most favourable circumstances. I was not altogether free from anxiety. A short stay in Berlin some time earlier had greatly alarmed me. I was then more than ever conscious of that which makes of the Prussians a people apart—I will not say a race apart, for the word is curiously abused, to the extent of giving history a mechanical and deterministic character which is contrary to the very spirit of history. I was conscious, I say, of something that makes of the Prussians a people apart; a people capable, for example, of a perfect acquaintance with the external apparatus of good breeding, yet producing the impression of something borrowed, artificial, and fatiguing which is the very contrary of good breeding. I particularly remember a religious service, after which the congregation went out to sing a hymn in the open air. This might have been very beautiful; the

[1] The French antithesis is between *Orientation* and *Désorientation*.—(B. M.)

music was perfect, although its perfection was a little lifeless, so that one thought of a huge phonograph; but when the voices broke into song everything was different: they were natural, individual, startlingly sincere. And all of a sudden I felt an inexpressible desire to get away from these people. They were not singing the glory of God. Their words of love had the accent of hatred. They were singing the glory of Prussia; they were praising German truth, the German God, the German appetite, the German greed. I took to my heels. And although since then many expressions of peace have been heard in Berlin, I have never been able to believe in them, for the scene I have just described, with many others, alas! had thrown a revealing light into the very depths of the German heart, and on the meaning which the words "idealism" and "religion" now possess for the German.

The error I am about to confess is not that I feared war even more after this experience than I had feared it before: where I was utterly mistaken was in this: I feared that war would inevitably compromise the spiritual impulse of my country. And the truth has been exactly the contrary; and I confess that my joy was great when I realized that I had been completely mistaken.

It is true that had Germany been a little less

imperious and insolent many matters might have turned out otherwise. Germany felt obliged to inform the world that hers was the cult, not merely of force, but of brutality and ferocity. She was bloodthirsty for the love of being so, and for the sake of making the whole world feel fear and horror. The men of Baden, Saxony, Bavaria, and Würtemberg have effaced themselves before the Prussians, and have endeavoured to replace any independence of mind that still remained to them by the Prussian mentality, that is, by a mentality which has hardly been touched by civilization or Christianity, and which has apparently stopped short at an ideal akin to that of Nebuchadnezzar II, who lived 600 years before Christ.

The withering rapidity of the German attack had not merely the merit of forcing us to react immediately without even a moment's reflection; it also compelled us to see it for what it was—that is, as the unloosing of forces which threatened the very spirit of civilization, as well as its works.

You will see a France worthy of admiration. But it is necessary to point out the fact that France was compelled to choose between the instinctive and heroic self-sacrifice of the martyr who dies for his ideal and an unspeakable abdication which would have made her a human remnant which, in order to save its life, had lost its reason for living.

I should have been a panegyrist, not a historian, had I not made this statement, which perhaps a little diminishes the merit of my country, but which has the advantage of providing us with an exact and truthful idea of what has happened.

The sudden and impulsive awakening of the country, and the serenity, at once calm and joyful, with which it confronted the peril, has assumed a miraculous aspect; yet in reality all that happened was absolutely natural. This proves only that in our century of unmitigated materialism and industrialism there still exist those spiritual forces which rule the world and will always rule it. Germany has proved herself lacking not merely in heart, but in intelligence. Despite all her historical science, she has understood nothing of history; she admired Napoleon I without understanding the lessons which are to be derived from his life, or rather she saw only his prodigious rise, but was unwilling to meditate on the lessons of his fall.

In 1870 France paid dearly for the errors of the first Empire. Modern Germany will pay as dearly for the crime and follies which she is committing to-day. She will pay for them because there is a justice immanent in things, and because this justice grows, from century to century, more

sensitive, juster, and more severe; and because, whatever name it is called by, none can escape from it.

I remember the people of Berlin, who tried to insist on my admiring their houses, littered with nicknacks of the First Empire, and their shops, overflowing with those wearisome articles made to sell which are part of the spiritual furniture of Germany: it was easy to perceive, in the pleasure with which they spoke of their admiration of Napoleon I, a complaisance which was wholly personal; they congratulated themselves on admiring the famous conqueror, on keeping him alive, so to speak, far more than did the French of to-day, who in their eyes were decrepit republicans, feeding themselves on dreams and illusions.

If I think it my right, and even my duty, to judge Napoleon, and if I do not regard his work with unbounded admiration, it must not be supposed that in speaking of his errors I intend to compare them with the errors which have been committed before our eyes during the past year. If the soul of Napoleon I wanders through the remote provinces which he wrongly annexed by force to his ephemeral Empire, it sees that the memory which he left there is not that of a murderer of peoples or a devastator of country-sides,

and that as far as Dalmatia the peasants point with gratitude to the roads built by Napoleon I. If Wilhelm II, on the other hand, taking the pilgrim's staff, were to disguise himself as a traveller in order to pass through Alsace, there to discover what the people think of the system of material prosperity, but also of demoralizing spiritual tyranny, of denunciation and suspicion, to which his administration has reduced that country, he would perhaps at last understand the cry which rises against him from the very soil, a cry which can only increase in force. In the world of to-morrow the horror—I do not say hatred—the horror of Prussianism, of that Prussian science which has inspired militarism, of that Prussian religion which renders its worshippers mad with pride, will become the measure of the relative civilization of the two nations.

Yet, on the 3rd August 1914 there was on the one hand light and on the other darkness, on the one hand good and on the other evil. Do I mean by this that the French were a people of saints and angels and the Germans a people wholly of devils? You know I do not mean that. You have already seen, and you will see again to-day, that I am striving not to paint France in imaginary colours; not to allow myself to be carried away by my love of my country, to close my eyes to her faults,

her vices, and her needs; but I am forced to say and to see that the cause of France is the cause of the ideal and a disinterested cause, the cause of the liberty and the life even of the individual and the nation, while Germany, with her splendid material impulse, the perfection of her scientific and military equipment, and many other characteristics which are worthy of her admiration, has already destroyed the energy of the individual throughout her Empire. There is no room nowadays for independent citizens in Germany, and the appeal of the "Ninety-three Intellectuals" to the civilized nations was merely a new species of abdication. This was the collective abdication, or rather the collective suicide, of ninety-three persons who were very fairly representative of the élite of Germany, and who, fortified by the scientific consideration of which they were the object, published a kind of encyclical, in order to write which they renounced the scientific spirit. And what is left of the most consummate science once it is deprived of the scientific spirit? In appearance it is still salt, but salt that has lost its savour.

Well, I am quite sure there are worthy people who will tell me: "All that you say in favour of your cause the Germans are saying in support of theirs. No doubt you are speaking in good faith: and so are they. But it would be childish on our

part not to see that your authority and that of those who speak as you do cannot prevail over that of the "Ninety-three Intellectuals" of Germany. We who are impartial and disinterested witnesses, desiring the good of all, can only beg you to conclude peace."

And I believe in the perfect good faith of those who speak thus: I believe in their sincerity, their good intentions, and even, to a certain point, in their disinterestedness. But does not the desire that none shall disturb their habits, that none shall interrupt their dream, count for nothing as regards their attitude? If these are not materially interested preoccupations they are certainly morally interested; they are upheld by a kind of egoism. Yet this is not the chief reproach to be addressed to certain pacifists who persist in closing their eyes to the evidence of the facts that the nations of the Entente did not make ready for the war, that all, singly and together, made every possible effort to maintain peace, and that now their essential aim is to establish peace by means of war, since they have not been able to secure it by other means. How is it that they do not perceive that to counsel peace at this moment is equivalent to telling those who were attacked by Germany with a degree of premeditation, of cynicism, and of hypocrisy which put one in mind of a colossal revival—which is

not, alas! an apologue—of the fable of the wolf and the lamb: "Make haste and let the wolf eat you, so that the hideous beast, replete with your flesh and that of your children, may devote itself to fresh attacks, and may multiply and fill the world."

It is here that we come into conflict with religious feelings and moral convictions which are infinitely respectable, delicate, and gratifying. Did not Jesus say: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"? (Matt. v. 9). Taking these words apart from their context, and considering them apart from the perpetual commentary which is afforded by the life of the Master, we shall end by giving them a conventional, formal, external sense, forgetting that the words of Jesus are spirit and life. On the pretext that there is no peace for man save in death, are we to preach suicide, and will assassination, as a means of procuring peace for others, become a pious duty? Such absurd consequences show sufficiently well that Christ is speaking here, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, of the spiritual order: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the peacemakers." And as the poor in spirit are in general the richest in moral force, the most capable of shedding about them enthusiasm, courage, and joy, so the peacemakers are not

the weak who avoid conflict, still less are they the cowards who fly from it; they are the strong, the robust, the proud men, capable of indignation, capable of taking the weak under their protection: they are those whose physical forces are almost illimitable, because they are nourished by a moral force which they can never distrust. They are peacemakers because they do not lend their strength in the service of personal causes, or trivial material interests, but in the service of the eternal task which all nature is performing. Jesus was not of those who cry "Peace, peace, and there is no peace" (Jer. vi. 14). He made war pitilessly upon the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and on that day when a word would have sufficed to save His life He refused to pronounce it. Perhaps you will say: He made war upon Satan. But is not this precisely what we are all doing, all we who are members of the Entente? Is it our fault if in this war upon Satan—that is, in what we to-day call the struggle for liberty, peace, and love—we have been suddenly prevented from conducting it as we have hitherto done, and have been forced to arm ourselves with guns and rifles?

I beg the true friends of peace to make a serious effort to perceive the reality of things, and not to allow themselves to be deceived by appearances.

Corruptio optimi pessima, said an ancient philosopher. There is nothing more dangerous than the corruption of that which is best. The cause of peace would be compromised for many years to come were certain of those who have constituted themselves its official spokesmen to allow men to suppose that what they desire above all is immediate peace, peace at any price, a display of diplomatic fireworks of a sudden illuminating the whole world amid the plaudits of a delirious crowd—a crowd which, even before the next day was grey on the horizon, would learn, from the omnipresence of the Prussian police, the meaning which our enemies give to the word "peace."

Perhaps I seem to be preaching; yet it is history that I have been relating, recent history of which I myself have been a witness, history whose main outlines ought to be recorded before it is too late. Who knows whether in a few years' time even those who have been the actors and the heroes on the historic stage will be able to remember what they were? Memory, even when used with some care, is a very imperfect instrument, even for the recording of the most definite, ordinary, and material facts: and do not all of us know that there are days of our life which we have been unable, at night, to record in our intimate diary? Perhaps a point of exclamation, a musical

phrase, a few lines in a foreign tongue, disconnected words like those of Pascal, are the only traces which we were able to leave of the most important days of our life, days when life lost itself on the heights of joy or suffering, or days of glorious vision, on which our human speech failed us. And when, later, we turn over the yellowing pages, instead of the resurrection of the past which we looked for, which we were seeking, we find only the proof that we are all slowly dying, and that the precise memory of the ecstasies of a bygone day will not awaken at our call.

Before seeking to describe to you what happened in our mountains at the moment war was declared, I must rapidly describe the state of the country a few days earlier. I am justified in believing that by speaking of the country I live in I may succeed in giving you a true idea of what has happened all over France, save only for a few exceptions, of which, however, I have not heard.

The war of 1914 created, instantaneously, and inexplicably, as regards the mechanism of the phenomenon, a national state of soul, a living union of minds, hearts, and wills. And I think it may be said that only twice before has my country been swept by such enthusiasm: in 1789 and at the time of the Crusades.

Isolated as we were last August, receiving our newspapers only after long delay, reduced to one small sheet, of which we felt that only the official *communiqué* deserved a certain credence, we could scarcely imagine what was happening in the south-east, the south-west, the centre, and all the rest of the country. When the first letters began to arrive, written by reliable persons, capable of observing and of feeling, we experienced a joy and a pride whose intensity it is not easy to describe. There was reason for this pride, for this joy. The national frame of mind a few months before the war was nothing to be proud of, nor did it enable one to foresee any awakening of the national conscience. Of course we should have hoped that the brutality of the German attack would provoke a revulsion of indignation, but the most optimistic were far from dreaming of the possibility of what they actually witnessed.

There is a popular phrase, only too familiar, which was heard all over France at the beginning of 1914: "We are in a mess—in a regular mess," and the people of Paris, by these words, meant that France was living from day to day, that she had no guiding ideas before her eyes, that she had no thought of seeking spiritual leaders, and that when ideals and duties are lost

to sight in the higher spheres of society the rest of society would be foolish not to follow the example set them.

The General Elections of April had witnessed to a sort of intellectual and moral depression in the majority of the electors. More than one deputy owed his election to his mediocrity, to the sharp cunning of his speeches, to a talent for saying "yes" and "no" to the same question, to a craftiness and effrontery worthy of the charlatans whom we used to see at our fairs, dazing their simple hearers by floods of imperious eloquence.

The sight of these symptoms, and others still, as I shall tell you, produced an impression of decadence which was rendered still more disturbing by the indiscreet zeal of the physicians whom France, with untiring obstinacy, refused to call to her bedside. I will say nothing of those outside France—those of Berlin in particular—who assumed an air of immaculate virtue; but even in our own country a host no doubt of well-intentioned people, but of people who made the mistake of forgetting history, professed that all the maladies of France would be healed as by magic on the day when she should change her political régime and the government of France should be overthrown. They acted in accord-

ance with their beliefs. I may say that, impelled by the idea that the country could recover only through an excess of sickness, they believed they were serving the good cause by greatly exaggerating our ills. However, the desertion of the country districts was threatening our agriculture, and was also contributing to a most alarming decrease of the birth-rate. It was assisted, moreover, by a striking increase of alcoholism. The war led to the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of absinthe throughout the country, but this remedy would not have sufficed; had it not been supported by other measures which were quite as much needed, it would have been ineffectual. Since it is asserted that our people, refined and intelligent as they are, have yet insufficient force of character to punish by public disapproval the drunkard and those who encourage drunkenness, it is important to suppress the privilege of the *bouilleurs de cru*. This expression, which you may have encountered in our newspapers, refers to the landowners or farmers who by law are authorized to distil the fruits which they gather—grapes, apples, pears, cherries, and so forth—and to make alcohol therefrom. Formerly in many parts of France the peasant used to drink a small glass of brandy every morning whose strength was about 36°.

To-day the stills are of improved types and exist in great numbers. Every estate has its own still. Brandies are made of greater and greater strength, so that samples of 70° to 80° are not rare. Far from decreasing the consumption, this progressive increase of strength sets up an irritation of the throat which urges the drinker to increase his potations, and it is very plain that in the Cevennes, for example, the race which towards 1880 was quite clearly tending to acquire a greater strength is now gradually becoming less handsome, less shapely, less stalwart.

Well, then, the suppression of the privilege of the *bouilleurs de cru* is called for in our country, and another measure, no less radical, which will perhaps be difficult to obtain, for I have not observed that any demand for it has been expressed by any of our temperance movements. In the Latin countries, where the people naturally incline to acquire the morality of their laws, and to take it for granted that all things tolerated by law are just and good, the law ought to inflict a sort of civic incapacity on the sellers of alcohol. I mean that the very fact of setting up as a seller of alcoholic drinks ought to make it impossible for a citizen to be elected mayor or municipal councillor.

Fifty years ago it used to be said in France

that the elections were settled by the priests. Now it is the retailers of alcohol who manage the elections. I wish with all my heart that they might be deprived of this privilege, not to restore it to the *curés*, who have other things to do than to meddle in elections, but so that the people might cease to delegate to others what is their own affair. They have fought too hard to win their civic rights to justify their renouncing their exercise now.

You see how the question of alcoholism is involved with that of political morality. I do not think I am blindly optimistic when I say that in both questions we have passed the critical period, and there were very visible signs of improvement before the July of 1914. The war upon alcoholism was opened, I believe, under the leadership of certain Protestant pastors, but apparently without any great success. Two bishops also organized the campaign in their dioceses—Mgr. Turinaz at Nancy and Mgr. Lacroix in the mountains of the Tarontaise: but it was the intervention of the schoolmasters and schoolmistresses which in a large number of departments lent it a far greater efficacy, because they reached the circles which it is most important to affect. Many socialists lent a hand in this work of national hygiene, and if the salutary reflections

engendered by the war were to give us the strength to extirpate this plague we might bless those who unchained it.

You will forgive me if I have insisted at some length on this problem. I do not wish to paint our situation in colours darker than the reality. The evil is great, it is true, but even with all the formidable companion evils which form its train it has not touched the backbone of the nation, save perhaps in Normandy, where the campaign is now being hotly contested. I have spoken to you not as allies but as friends and brothers, because it seems to me that the cares of one should be the cares of the other. You know that it is one of the faults of the Latin peoples to love praise. We would do much to deserve yours and to be worthy of your esteem. Take advantage, not only for our good, but for the sake of the good itself, of this rather feminine aspect of our character. The word of an Englishman, casually spoken in passing, in the hazard of conversation, expressing the hope that France may accomplish her mission without being checked by the ravages of alcoholism, may influence us for good.

There were other weak places in our moral armour; for example, the extreme mutual animosity of the various political parties. Hence

absurd legends of incredible foolishness, with which each party would seek to soil its adversaries. The spread of calumny constitutes a real danger to the French mind. A man first repeats a calumny through political zeal, in order to discredit the party of his adversary; then he repeats it mechanically, without precisely knowing why, principally in order not to appear a simple provincial, who still believes in the virtue of women or of rulers. And naturally these fictitious statements, which more often than not are senseless and baseless, percolate through the great public, enervating its moral sense, and the mass of these scandals gradually suggests to its mind that corruption is universal. Hence a governmental crisis, anarchical ferment, and social dislocation.

Political passions were raised to such a pitch that the very foundations of the moral unity of the country seemed to be shattered thereby. "Do you always devour one another in France?" I was asked, not very long before the war, by a German diplomatist, who spoke in the airy fashion of a man who frequents the Parisian boulevards and knows how to assume their chaffing tone. And he tried to infuse into his voice an accent of compassion which was truly comical. But it was only too true—the French were devouring one another.

I have just been calling your attention to some very obvious faults. It is enough to spend three days in Paris to become acquainted with them; but if you spent three weeks or three months there you would discover, I need hardly add, many of the brighter aspects of the French qualities.

After all, the division of our country into two camps, those of the clericals and the anti-clericals, however regrettable, has nothing shameful about it. The two adversaries represent ideas, not base material interests. We have here the eternal conflict between the past and the future, antiquity and modernity; and although, between the two parties, we sometimes lose our heads and take up an ignoble position, perhaps those who deem themselves wise and moderate because they keep out of the duel are principally weak and idle persons under whose guidance the world would avoid those crises which are certainly dangerous to the nations, but which also constitute the landmarks of their history. However, both at home and abroad the prophets of evil had become so numerous that on the 31st of July we assuredly should not have dared to imagine as possible the spectacle which a few hours later had become the reality.

On Thursday the 30th of July, early in the morning, a few neighbours came to inform me that soldiers who had arrived on the evening of

the day before, with three or four days' leave, had been recalled by telegram a few minutes after their arrival home. The newspapers received a little later said nothing of this measure; so that one wondered if it was only of a local character. Yet it had spread alarm through our country-side. There was anger in certain houses. The military administration was criticized with a bitterness that was almost indignation. When I told my neighbours: "Wait: it will all be explained; it wasn't done simply to annoy you," they replied with the peculiar obstinacy of the countryman who is quite determined not to alter his opinion.

On Saturday, the 1st of August, at five in the afternoon, the bell of the Catholic church of the neighbouring village of St. Michel began to ring fast and loud. Men looked at one another with a constriction of the heart. Would this be the terrible news?

They waited, not daring to speak. Two minutes perhaps elapsed. And people began to hope. But now the bell of the Protestant church also broke out into speech, mingling its discordant sounds with those of the other bell. Yet a glimmer of hope still remained to me. Who could tell?—perhaps a fire had broken out in the village! But no, there was no sign of smoke. It was war. It was indeed war. We were all gathered together, but we did not

venture to look at one another. My son set out to obtain news from the nearest small town. The two bells did not cease ringing; as though they wanted to irritate the wound which their outburst had made in our hearts; and I gazed upon the vast horizon which is visible from my hermitage. The roads were as empty as before. Had not our peasants understood? I thought, in anguish. But I soon saw that I had underrated them. The steam threshing-machines which were at work here and there all over the country-side were suddenly stopped. The workers, perched on the machines or on the stacks of straw, were gazing about them in every direction. Then I saw one who raised his hands to the heavens in a lofty gesture which I had never seen them make. Was it in prayer? Or was it something else?

Then the rhythmical gestures of the great work of harvest were resumed. The engines began to pant once more, but in a strange human silence. Yet all night long the work never ceased. They wanted to finish it; to finish at all costs, in order to leave bread for the women and children. Yet all through that historic night no signal was heard from the engines. Our humble countryfolk instinctively avoided the use of that piercing call; orders were given by signs, or under the breath. Was there not in this insignificant detail a singu-

larly poetical trait of moral delicacy? The voice of the tocsin, crying that the country was in danger, had imposed silence on all other voices.

Towards seven o'clock I went down into the village. It was almost deserted. The Catholic *curé*, the Protestant pastor, and the schoolmaster had shaken hands with their friends. The mayor, assisted by a gendarme who had already come in from some neighbouring district, was pasting up the order of requisition. In the few women to be seen one was conscious of a great oppression, but also of a degree of calmness and of discipline which I should never have believed possible. This tiny village of St. Michel de Chabrillanoux was the same as in 1870, yet what a contrast! It seemed to me that if what was happening there was no exception, France, if she was to perish, would at least perish beautifully.

At the usual hour each withdrew to his room, but no one thought of sleeping. Each one passed the night by his window, dreaming and reflecting. At dawn the flock of sheep from the neighbouring farm set out for the pasture, and in their monotonous procession along the track there was more than a beneficent symbol of the life that continues in spite of all.

The bells did not ring that morning. Did they think to keep silence until the day when they

should win pardon for having rung in the war by announcing a *Te Deum*?

The two churches of the village were almost empty; and, what was better, so were the cabarets. The great day of mobilization for our district was Monday, the 3rd of August. On this Sunday there were a few isolated departures, but no one knew of them, and I did not see them. On the following day I was cowardly. I should have liked to return to the village, to press the departing soldiers to my heart. My courage failed me. Still obsessed by the memory of 1870, I feared, not scenes of emotion, but a display of distressing patriotism, cries of hatred, stupid boasts and threats, drinking songs alternating with and profaning our national anthems. I climbed a neighbouring hill whence with a pair of binoculars one can plainly see what is happening on a number of the more important highways of the district. It was shortly after three o'clock that I first noticed, on the further side of a deep, narrow valley, something like a long, dark ribbon which seemed to moved. Then suddenly the "Marseillaise" burst forth, reverberated by all the echoes of the mountain, but there was something reserved and controlled about it; it had almost the accent of a psalm. Overcome by intense feeling, standing alone up there on the crest of the hill, I joined from afar in the song of our soldiers who were leaving for the

front, until the moment when the turn of the road hid them from my sight.

The sun shone out, and on all the other highways other interminable processions were descending toward the railway-stations with the same order, with the slow, heavy pace of our peasants when they set out for the days of sowing. And the dear fellows were indeed setting forth to sow—to sow the best blood of France.

Mediocre France, whose faults, but now, I did not seek to conceal from you, was now transformed. All the forces of life and of idealism which she bears within herself were suddenly re-established. And when, a few days later, we were able to learn that the spectacle had been the same from the Pyrenees to the Vosges, despite the horror of this war an ineffable joy spread throughout the country, a joy that men dared scarcely betray, that the newspapers were powerless to express. France was erect, ready for all things, morally prepared as she had never been, and if her sword was ill-sharpened, if her fortresses in the north were stripped of ammunition because she had never insulted Germany by foreseeing the violation of Belgium, yet her heart was by no means cast down.

RELIGIOUS UNION AND REVIVAL

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS UNION AND REVIVAL

It was at first intended to deal in this chapter with the new attitude which the schools appear to be ready to assume in respect of the Church—The conflict of the two institutions, lately so violent, will not be resolved by the subjection of the Church to the State nor by that of the State to the Church, but by an effort to understand the past history of religion, an effort perfectly scientific and respectful—A question akin to the former is that of the religious revival and the war—Much has been said of this, as is natural—An inquiry promoted by the *Grande Revue* resulted in the most contradictory evidence—Reasons for these contradictory replies—The great error was made of not commencing by a definition of the word "religion"—An attempt at a correct definition—The religious character of the tacit reply made by all Frenchmen to the order of mobilization—An atmosphere of joy—The horizon scanned for signs of a religious revival. It has taken place—The King of Belgium has saved his soul.

A FEW months ago, when I was first writing these chapters, I had determined to deal in this, the third, with the question of Church and School in France. Until 1870 or thereabouts, as you will know, our public instruction was, in all that con-

cerned religion and morality, subordinated to the Roman Catholic Church. In districts containing important minorities of Protestants or Jews, religious instruction was given for the benefit of these minorities by the ministers of their own cults.

Since the 4th September 1870 one of the first preoccupations of the parties in power has been to establish a separation between the Churches and public instruction; so that by 1882 the lay control of the schools, also known as the neutrality of the schools, was completely organized. The promulgation of the new law was the occasion of a bitter conflict between the Conservative party, which desired to maintain the old state of affairs, and the parties of the Left. The latter were accused of being less anxious for neutrality than for the substitution of a new dogma in the place of the dogma of the Churches: a rationalistic and antichristian dogma. There were on both sides, and we may even say there are still, highly regrettable excesses. But time has brought healing, and both sides have had leisure to reflect. Instead of thinking of themselves and their party, instead of seeking absolutely to enforce their formula or their programme, men have learned to consider the living reality, the youth of France. On the one hand a large number of priests have had time to reflect, and have finally come to see that nothing could be more immoral

and more dishonouring to God and the Church than to confide the teaching of the catechism to a schoolmaster who is possibly an unbeliever ; on the other hand, the public schoolmasters, teachers, and professors have come to understand that the neutrality of the schools is a myth impossible of realization.

What then is to be done? We seem to be in an *impasse* from which our country is powerless to escape ; or rather, from which it can escape only by the compulsion of an external authority, which should force our instruction either to become "confessional" as of old, or "anti-confessional," rationalistic, atheistic.

And in this domain it seems to me that France is on the eve of winning one of her greatest spiritual victories. She is on the way, if I am not mistaken, to finding the solution of this problem of Church and School, which will in time impose itself on all the nations. She is solving it not by fortuitous, provisional, and precarious means, which would end nothing and satisfy neither the heart nor the mind. No ; she has found—or rather is beginning to find—for it will be a very long task, which cannot be realized and produce its best fruits until several generations have elapsed—a complete and final solution, which can wrong no one, neither in the past nor in the future, which is perfectly

in harmony with scientific methods and is full of understanding and respect and what the Italian poet has so expressively termed *intelletto d'amore* —the understanding of love—for the Churches and the religious factors in life.

A few words will suffice to explain the new attitude which the teaching profession is tending to assume in respect of the Church and the Churches, and it will doubtless seem to you strange that so simple a solution was so long in being discovered; the truth is that it involves a complete transformation not only of our habits and customs, but, what is far more important, of our own point of view, our manner of judgment, and, to use the modern phrase, of our mentality.

Let us review the various *dramatis personæ* of the scholastic conflict as we have seen it in France during the last forty years—for it was a drama, a drama of the collective mind, whose grandeur and beauty the spectators often failed to perceive. People abroad called us a race of squabblers; some pitied us, others raised their hands to heaven, deploring our lack of discipline; others, finally, applauded and prepared to divide our spoils. No one thought to ask himself whether perhaps it was not the same with the life of nations as with the life of the individual; whether their life and their progress was not the result of opposition and conflict.

This is so true that when I bring these characters before your eyes you will tell me that they are entities, abstractions, and you will not be mistaken. And it is this that constitutes the importance and the liveliness of our political discussions. They arise from the clash, not of material interests, but of principles.

The first person of the drama is the Church, who, with incomparable assurance, affirms that she is a perfect society, created by God Himself, and that her teaching is infallible. Therefore nothing on earth can remain outside her domain. She is the mother and mistress : *mater et magistra.*

The second person is the lay teacher, who with touching simplicity and an accent of authority like that of the Church proclaims the imprescriptible rights of reason.

The antithesis between the two is complete. Each acts in equally good faith, and with the same confidence, and each repeats, with the same conviction, that the one will kill the other.

The third person is the State. Now the State would willingly make peace between the Church and the teacher, but does not know how. The idea of putting its power at the service of the Church, and of ordering the schoolmaster to teach the dogmas of the Church, did not come from the State, nor the idea of making each

village school a sort of anti-Church. Perhaps this dream originated with a handful of individuals, in particular with a few priests who had escaped from the Church, but the very infrequent efforts made to realize it fell under the general reprobation. However, as the State was forced to propose a solution, it pronounced a sentence whose incurable weakness every one at once comprehended, but which had at least the merit of closing a chapter, and of dismissing the litigants to the fresh air of life and experience.

Religious neutrality has been the supreme law of our public instruction since 1882, and is so still, but if I am not mistaken the years of its life are now numbered and it will disappear from the statute-book, although the schools will not therefore become, as of old, dependent on the Church, any more than they will constitute an anti-Church. We shall escape from the battle with neither victors nor vanquished, or rather there will be only victors and no vanquished.

It did not take long to discover the impossibility of neutrality; indeed, the term was applied to something very different. Nothing more was asked of the teachers than a certain reserve and moderation when in the exercise of their functions they spoke of religious matters. This was a *modus vivendi*, but in no sense a final solution.

Under these conditions a certain number of members of the teaching profession, members belonging to all ranks of the educational hierarchy, conceived the idea of an entirely novel attitude. The schools cannot ignore the Church, nor the Churches, for these institutions are in a sense the soil on which the best of our modern civilization has been raised. Why then should the schools make a pretence of being unable to see them? The Church is the best part of our past, the best part of our history, the spiritual mould into which the heart of each one of us has been cast; by a sort of optical illusion we think, when we speak its name, more especially of its hierarchy, its dogmas, its councils; but the Church is far more than these: it is ourselves; it is the communion of the ideal and the practical in which our ancestors lived and into which they put the best of themselves. Thus many of our fellow-citizens felt an immense need of knowing the Church, not from the metaphysical or doctrinal point of view, which is that taught by the priest, but from the practical and human point of view, which is that of history and science.

Religious history not only forms an integral part of general history, so that the latter would be lacking in one of its most important chapters, a chapter more important than that dealing with

literature and the arts and sciences, were religious history divorced from it. Religious history, that is, the history of the efforts of man to achieve truth and justice, the history of the ascent, always failing and always recommencing, of mankind toward love, is that which really constitutes history; here are to be found the true titles of nobility of the human species, and here all, from the humblest peasants to the masters of thought, teach us to know both the weakness and the grandeur of man, and to know ourselves.

Let us be just to all. We must recognize the fact that if religious history has been eliminated, in most European countries, from the programmes of official and public education, it is not the fault of education; it is the fault of the Church. The latter not only demanded the most absolute privileges for her dogmas; she demanded similar privileges in the matter of her history, but these were impossible.

While artists, literary men, and scientists were only too pleased to be noticed, the ecclesiastics claimed special treatment, raising a cry of persecution and sacrilege the moment the historian ventured to glance in their direction. They denied criticism the right to apply to religious questions the same methods which are applied to other branches of human activity, and con-

sidered that they had the right to impose theological judgments, which may perhaps be truth itself, but which have one radical fault: they are not the fruit of free research. For there is a spiritual bread as there is a temporal bread, and the chief thing is not to find a slice of it by our pillows each morning, brought thither by the angels, but to gain it in labour and suffering.

These protests were made so vehemently and in such pathetic accents that the historians, without being convinced, were subdued. They are not disembodied spirits. When they have spent many years of intensive labour in writing the history of a period, they naturally hope that their book will be read and favourably appreciated. The inclusion of a chapter dealing with religious history would excite a formidable tide of opposition against the newborn work, an opposition which is implacable, because it believes that it is defending sacred rights. As such a chapter would for other reasons be the most difficult to write, it is naturally omitted; or perhaps I ought to employ another word, for there is no omission, custom in this respect being so firmly established that the intimate history of religious affairs does not enter into the normal scheme of historical writing.

This is so far the case that ten years ago there appeared a new edition of an excellent "Manual

of the History of Religions," by M. Chantepie de la Saussaye, in which you may read what are the religions of Central Africa or Oceania, but you will search in vain for the section which would doubtless interest you the most—the history of Christianity.

In a generation or two such amazing facts will appear inexplicable.

Our religious history has been divorced not only from our schools, but also from our popular and secular history, and this factitious divorce was designed and organized by the clergy of the various cults. But on all sides, and especially in our primary education, as well as in our secondary and superior education, men have felt that it was impossible not to point out the absurdity of this divorce. Does the political past of our country appear less great, less noble, because it is no longer exclusively recorded by a royal historiographer? On the contrary: its vitality, its laboriousness, its persistent effort, and its faith in the realization of the programme which it has bequeathed to us, cause us to love that past, and lend us strength to prepare for the future. Political history becomes a spectacle of enduring solidarity, a spectacle which we feel ourselves called upon to continue, with increasing happiness and efficacy.

It will be the same with the history of religions; the priest has the right to teach the history of his religion from the standpoint of dogma and revelation, but just as he does not wrong a religion which he does not profess by studying it from the standpoint of his natural intelligence, so the historian does not wrong Christianity by approaching it with his ordinary implements. The real wrong would be to ignore it, and, by treating it as of old by the method of omission, to seem to regard it as a superficial and insignificant movement.

Historic science has therefore claimed the history of religions, above all the religions of our century and our country, as part of its domain, like other manifestations of the human mind, and the ideas which I have just expounded have become, to some extent, a common bond.

In 1880 the creation of a chair of the history of religion in the College of France excited violent protest, but to-day such an incident would seem perfectly natural and would pass unnoticed; and it may be prophesied that thirty or forty years hence matters will have progressed still farther. The religious history of each country will become the most interesting and the most efficacious factor of education, of whatever degree.

The schools will no longer dream of regarding

the Church as the absolute truth, still less as organized untruth, but will see in it a long-continued effort, always defeated and always triumphant, towards an ideal goal which retires as one approaches it. By studying it, that is to say by seeking to revive the past which is ours, which is the past of our fathers and has left such numerous traces in our moral and intellectual character, the schools will pay it the finest homage that sons can pay to their fathers, for they will regard it with a full sense of its life and its continuity, with a respect and sympathy, without which there is no historic spirit worthy of the name, nor even any scientific spirit.

If the change of viewpoint which I have just predicted is realized, you can imagine the results which it would have for France. Two generations would suffice to eliminate clericalism and anti-clericalism, those two intellectual diseases which so often, during the last century, absorbed our attention, exhausted our energies, dominated our political life, and compromised our destinies. We shall have crossed a line which every people will some time or other have to cross.

Such are the ideas that I lately proposed to put before you, supporting them by facts, and showing you how the profound transformation which I have tried to describe is now in reality on the

way to accomplishment. The inviolable union of all Frenchmen without distinction of political party or religion, which was so great a surprise to foreign observers in the August of 1914, would not have been what it was—instantaneous, complete, enthusiastic, lasting—if it had not for a long time been prepared in men's hearts and minds.

But on further reflection respecting my lectures, it seemed to me that this subject was perhaps rather remote from the things that now preoccupy us, and that it would suffice to draw your attention in passing to this aspect of the matter, so that after the war you will try to follow a movement with which the newspapers hardly ever deal, yet which, if it should succeed, would tend to ensure the disappearance of the antithesis between what we may call the two Frances; the antagonism, which has hitherto been regarded as irreducible, between the sons of the Crusades and the children of Voltaire.

I have regarded the question from the French point of view, because with us it is more clearly defined and more embittered than in other countries, where men are less extreme, and Logic a less tyrannical mistress, often demanding the support of experience.

With us, on the other hand, the rationalism

of the theologians and that of the freethinkers—the two brothers and enemies display singular points of resemblance—have taken one another's measure and each has promised itself that it will destroy the other. They have assumed an importance which is not really theirs and which has been wrongly accorded them, for theology is not religion.

However this may be, although the struggle between the ecclesiastical and the secular spirit has sometimes seemed as though it would make the nation lose its head and involve it in endless conflicts, this struggle is taking place or will take place everywhere; no nation which has been nourished on the Christian tradition can escape it. This fever is the transition from the age of theology—whether a conservative or a revolutionary theology be in question—to the age of history. Perhaps our experiences may be useful to you, or at least interesting. Your attentive observation of events of this nature across the Channel would be not only a mark of sympathy, but a very desirable collaboration in, and in a sense a continuation of, the spiritual work of the *entente cordiale*.

I wish now briefly to examine a question closely akin to the last, but more immediate, and one that seems to be one of the foremost questions of the

day. On all sides we read articles dealing with the religious revival and the war.

It is worth while to examine the facts a little more closely. Similar facts have been observed in other of the countries of the Entente; but I shall speak only of what is happening in France, partly because I am better informed thereof, and partly because the religious reputation of my country was more unfavourable and the revival there was perhaps more apparent and more plainly defined, and should be more decisive.

In a few of the French newspapers you would perhaps find almost daily articles proclaiming the religious revival, or proposing methods of organizing the same, and of drawing from it all the political consequences which in their opinion must proceed from it. Naturally there are other journals which see, in the events recorded by their contemporaries, merely the episodes of a revival of subconscious superstition, a revival which is always observed in times of unforeseen catastrophe, which is explained by disordered nerves and the instinctive effort to grasp at something, no matter what.

These two states of mind are exemplified in a curious inquiry into the matter which we are considering, conducted by the *Grande Revue*. This review had the good sense to call upon the

testimony of men of the most opposite tendencies, and not only those belonging to the *élite* of the nation, but those, whoever they might be, who had something to say and were anxious to say it.

The replies, contained in the monthly issues of the *Grande Revue* from April onwards, are contradictory in the extreme.

These replies from soldiers, for example, whether from those in the trenches at the front, or in the camps in the rear, or with the ambulances, or in the garrisons, who declare that they have seen nothing whatever resembling a religious revival evoked by the war; and from comrades who have lived beside them, sharing their life in the same trenches, who declare that both officers and men attend Mass with perfect regularity, and continually afford all the proofs of an exalted devotion. Which are we to believe? And among the witnesses in the rear the contradictions are no less flagrant and insuperable, even when they hail from the same district. One will tell you that in such a province the population is indifferent in the matter of religion; that it is still faithful to a few external rites, particularly in all that concerns burial, but that otherwise it is absolutely unmoved by anything that does not touch its immediate material interests. You turn the page, and you find another witness, equally positive, who affirms that this province is

on the way once more to become a fief of Clericalism, that the *curés* are the masters of public opinion, and that they will force their candidates on the people at the next elections.

One is tempted to believe that the only thing to do is to strike a mean between these two extremes; to admit that there must be an equal amount of exaggeration on either side. Perhaps this prudent method may be provisionally recommended, but it is certainly too convenient and too simple, and would easily lead us to absurd conclusions.

But another reflection occurs to us: a piece of evidence is the expression of a state of mind. Sometimes a man will see what he wants to see; sometimes he will see that which is obsessing his mind, that which he fears to see. The statements referred to above might be equally sincere, but equally subjective. It is obvious that we must make this reservation in the case in point, for the discoveries of the observer will be largely conditioned by a host of sentimental and personal factors, unless—and this is quite exceptional—the observer makes an effort to free himself from such factors. Here already are several reasons why we should carefully weigh such evidence, and should not succumb to the temptation to pay more attention to their number than to their quality.

Now there is another error which vitiates almost

all the replies made to the inquiry I am speaking of, and which still further diminishes their value. Neither the writers of the replies published nor those who questioned them thought clearly to define the scope of the inquiry, or to define what they meant by the word "religion." But we find nearly all of them applying the term "religious revival" to the sudden excitation of unreasoned and unreasonable feeling, the instinctive return of feeble hearts and childlike minds to mechanical superstitions, and the appeal of the helpless to spells and magic and even the cult of amulets.

A degree higher are those observers who confound religion with this or that Church, and, by deduction, with the external observation of the cult of the Church in question, while others confound the Church with its clergy. I know one little French town in which the religious party is hymning its victory, while the opposing party is consumed with spite. Everybody there is announcing the religious revival; and I had the curiosity to inquire the reason of this in various different circles. Everywhere the reply was the same: "The revival is incontestable; what proves it is that the soldiers as well as the officers of the garrison salute all the priests they meet."

There is a symptom of revival which you would not, perhaps, have thought of; but this example

will show you what confusion may prevail in certain types of mind.

I naturally do not wish to pretend that the salute accorded to the priests by our soldiers is a fact without significance. It means, no doubt, that many men who hitherto have seen, in the priest's cassock or the monk's robe, merely the uniform of men who have surrendered their own intelligence into the hands of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, have now found themselves, in the trenches or on the battlefield, side by side with priests or monks, and have come to understand that the cassock and the serge robe are above all the sign that those who wear them are engaged in a special manner in the service of their brothers. In the salute accorded to priests by the soldiers there is not only a gesture of courtesy, but, so to speak, an effort to correct and obliterate the precipitate conclusions formed of old.

But we must make the reservations already mentioned, in order to show that the evidence adduced by the inquiry conducted by the *Grande Revue* may be all equally sincere, despite its contradictory character.

Let us avoid falling into the same error, and let us try to determine what we ought to understand to-day by the words "religion" and "religious."

I say to-day, for you will not refuse, I hope, to accept an idea which is very dear to me, which

is, it appears, novel and revolutionary, but which to me seems obvious and elementary; namely, that the habit, which has become a sort of rule, of seeking a definition of religion which shall be valid for all ages, for our ancestors of the Stone Age as for ourselves, and for all countries, is an absurdity. In the religion of yesterday was the humble seed of the religion of to-day, but that of to-day is to that of yesterday what the oak, with its wealth of foliage and the mysterious energy of its roots, is to a humble acorn. In certain remote lands the word "science" immediately evokes the mental image of the astrologer and the diviner. Let us try to avoid committing a similar error on the subject of religion, and let us seek to demand a definition of religion of those around us who may be regarded as the most authentic representatives of religion.

Seen from this eminence religion comprises, if I am not mistaken, three series of facts: firstly, the intuition of a personal and social ideal above the present reality; secondly, a movement of our whole being, physical as well as moral, towards that ideal, as well as the whole of our efforts to realize it; finally, the act of faith by which, when we have affirmed the ideal, when we feel that we are made for it, we also feel, despite all obstacles, that we are capable of attaining it: the act of faith which, plainly perceiving the difficulties, leaves to reason

the task of studying them, and regards itself as certain of victory ; if it must be, after many defeats, and even through every sacrifice.

Is this definition exact? If it is, religion is the contrary of retrogression : the religious act *par excellence*, far from being the act by which bewildered man, losing his bearings, abandons the rudder of his life, is, on the contrary, the human act *par excellence* ; it is, in the first place, the intuition by whose means man becomes conscious at once of his empire over the visible world and his subordination to an ideal world which we cannot see, yet which we perceive so surely that we proclaim it eternal ; secondly, it is the act by which man, in the fullness of his life and strength, adheres to this ideal and finds in his adhesion the secret of individual and social life. Religion is therefore anticipation ; it is activity at its fullest ; it is conscious progress ; it is liberty, love, creation.

And now let us consider the majority of the facts which have been reported as symptoms of the religious revival. Is there any connection whatever between them and the definition of religion which we have just established? No ; very often there is none.

It would therefore be logical, it seems, to conclude that the war has not evoked any spiritual movement. But something in you protests against

this conclusion. You feel that it does not correspond with the reality. People have made the great mistake of citing as religious events episodes which were not religious. As I have tried to show you, the error arose from the fact that we nearly always confound religion with the Church, and the Church with its clergy, or even with its sacristans and its journalists.

In reality France has just experienced one of the most powerful religious movements known to history. Is it not the fact that while I was trying to define the word "religion," many of you thought of the description which I gave on another page of the mobilization in our mountains?

The manner in which the people of France accepted her decision on the evening of the 1st of August 1914 and the following night—and when I say the people, that is exactly the word I mean to use, and no other; the common people, the agricultural population of our country-sides and the working population of our towns—amounted to the collective accomplishment of a religious act which was perhaps the grandest and the most definite of history since that tragic night when the Son of Man, beneath the olives of Gethsemane, complied with the will of His Heavenly Father. And this is what gives our national hymns, when they break forth on the battlefield, a beauty and a wealth of

meaning which we never knew was theirs. They express our love of our native soil, but above all they sing the ideal truths which we had too long forgotten, the joy of sacrifice for others, the joy of giving one's life for the truth, the joy of making death a source of life.

And this again explains a phenomenon which has astonished many foreigners travelling in France, far from the battlefields. "I do not think your country is sufficiently depressed," a Swiss friend told me some weeks ago. "Do you find that it is frivolous, or indifferent, or too much concerned with its pleasures?" I asked him. "No," he replied; "but in the streets and public places, despite the number of women in mourning, there is not the affliction which I expected and wished to see. One does not feel that the public is bowing its head before the hand that is chastising it."

It is in the ideas that I have just been explaining to you that I seek the explanation of the facts which so astonished my friend. He observed them correctly, but he was unable to understand and interpret them.

The war has brought sorrows unspeakable to all our homes, but we should be short-sighted indeed did we fail to perceive that it has also brought with it an immense cause for joy: suddenly, irresistibly, it brought us to a standstill, and, wresting us from

all our egoistical cares, our daily anxieties, our trivial pleasures, our pitiful discussions, it set before us duties, responsibilities, and sacrifices such as no generation of the past was ever confronted with.

This terrible summons, addressed to France first of all—was it not a supreme honour for the whole nation; was it not like a sign of election? France understood its meaning, and individual sorrows were swallowed up in the joy of the nation, that it was once again in her power to do great things, to resume her historic mission, to affirm her ideal.

Let us for a moment return to the events of the 1st of August of last year. The war took France by surprise, because she believed in peace. Now I want you for a moment to consider that word "believe." It is worth the trouble, for here it has precisely its full moral significance. It is a word by which the Christian sums up the aggregate of his feelings, his aspirations, and his wishes; it is in this word that he centres his life; it gives him his unity and his direction, and becomes his collaborator in the infinite task which he has set himself. In the same sense, with the same abundance and the same ardour, France believed in peace. She has been accused of blindness, and not unjustly, for, as I have already shown you, she refused to allow herself to be seduced from her ideal and her dream, but those were wrong who imputed it to

her as a crime, for her faith in peace merely proves that her thoughts, even before the war, were dwelling in that higher sphere which is that of the religious initiates who are in advance of the time. We had confidence in Germany as in all other peoples. Confidence is a sentiment which does not admit of degrees; either it is, or it is not; and with a kind of chivalrous impulsiveness, we invited our neighbours in the East to return the compliment. Who was the pacifist who maintained that if one of the great nations of Europe were to disarm, no other nation would dare to attack it, for fear it would incur the reprobation of the whole world? I do not know if this proposition was known in France; but it is certain that France had virtually disarmed, and that she believed herself safe on account of her disarmament.

We have all deplored our mistake. But I sometimes wonder whether we are not wrong to deplore it, and whether this error has not been a blessing. Suppose we had been prepared; our material position would have been bettered thereby; that is obvious; but our moral position would have been far less clean, less beautiful; and we could not have enjoyed in its fullness the feeling that we have made a loyal effort, and one singularly difficult to make, when we consider the ever-bleeding wound of Alsace-

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Lorraine in the side of France; we should not have had the feeling that our candour was met by a premeditated aggression, not merely on the part of a military class, but by the constant collaboration, during more than forty years, of all the material and spiritual forces of Germany, from her government and her army, her business classes and her professors and priests, to her so-called socialists.

So the German attack appeared to us as an act of treachery, a betrayal of the cause of humanity of which we felt ourselves the representatives. And all this occurred in the heart of every Frenchman; none of us had need to wait until the official proclamations had explained what the war was, and why we were all mobilized; neither the soldiers called to the front, nor the old men, the women, and the children left in the rear. The words of the Government which reached us a few hours later were fine; they were just; but they were less so than the words of that mysterious dialogue which each of us had heard in his own heart, and which in a moment made of France only one heart and one mind.

This has been called the French miracle. And if by this is meant an event which was unforeseen, an event which is far from having exhausted its force, and which will perhaps mark the beginning

of a historic period in which the scale of political values will be changed, the expression is correct; none the less, this event, which has so amazed all the spectators, was the natural and living development of the preceding situation.

The pacific orientation of France was a matter of faith, not a matter of cowardice or slackness; it was not the fear of death, but, on the contrary, the desire that men might sacrifice themselves for causes more ideal, more human than the wars of people against people; so that the attack delivered by Germany appeared to her immediately in all its horror, not only as the possible end of France, but above all as an assault upon the spiritual ideas of which France, beloved France, has been the evangelist. It was a war between two spirits; or rather between *the spirit* simply on the one hand and on the other the human beast unchained, who, erecting his interests and his instincts into a law, has undertaken to enslave the world.

Before this danger it is natural that France should have collected herself; that she should have uplifted her mind and her heart to the height of the circumstances. She did not dream of deliberately calculating the chance of victory. To what end, since she could not capitulate? To what end, since between the material forces of Germany

and the spiritual impulse of France there was no common measure?

Perhaps there are those among you who are surprised to hear me speak of France as though she had a place apart, a pre-eminent rôle in the present juncture. Be sure that no one perceives more clearly than I the substantial unity of the nations of the Entente, and the beauty of the ideal towards which all are striving with a single effort, although it is dispersed over all parts of the globe. We are all members of one another, and the sorrows of Russia are yours, as they are ours. The ties which unite us go far beyond the clauses thought out by our diplomatists, and we feel that on the field of battle men are working out not merely a new map, but a new type of international relations, constituting groups of nations based less upon their material interests than on their collaboration in a common ideal.

But, just as in the human body each member has its function, so it is with the body of peoples which have risen against Germany. You, citizens of Great Britain, enjoy the unspeakable privilege of having drawn upon yourselves in a unique degree the hatred of Germany: *Gott strafe England!*

All honour to you! It will be one of your titles to glory throughout the centuries! But you are not jealous of ours. This is it: France was

the object, the goal of the war, more than any other of the allied nations; and when Germany raised her ogress' eyes toward the horizon, Germany, as formidable by reason of her appetite and her covetousness as because of her method, her organization, her science, and her Churches, all subservient to her designs, the first victim whom she always offered up to herself in her own thoughts, the victim over whom, by a refinement of civilized cruelty, she shed tears of pity, was France.

Poor France! say the Germans. Wilhelm II wished to subdue her before devouring her, to obtain from her I don't know what compliances, for the poor little country is to him, as to his people, an inexplicable enigma. This country, defeated in 1870, who would not, despite all the provocations offered, declare war upon her conquerors, and who, on the other hand, was never willing to pay him homage; this country upset all his reasoning and his prophecies, and hers was the unknown hand which wrote upon the walls of the banqueting hall words which neither the Emperor, nor his guards, nor his soldiers, nor his diviners could interpret. France desired peace; yet while Wilhelm II, the Lutheran Emperor, with a glittering train of followers, crossed the threshold of the Vatican, France had never invited him to

break his fast in the modest palace of the Elysée.

"It is a simple matter," certain foreign statesmen told us; "it commits no one to anything; and this act of courtesy might dissolve the clouds of misunderstanding." We have had men of greatly differing character at the head of our government; but none of them has ever dreamed of suggesting these overtures. Do not imagine that this was due to a touchy and unwholesome pride. My country has had many opportunities during the last thirty years of proving her modesty; on several occasions she has given way before Germany in questions in which her material interests were involved. But here, precisely because nothing but a mere gesture was at stake, it was essential that she should be loyal and true. She refused this homage to Wilhelm II in order not to betray the cause of the ideal.

And now, if we return to the question we were considering a while ago: will this war result in a religious revival?—we must reply that the very basis of this war is in a sense religious or spiritual; it is characterized by the fact that it is, more than any war has hitherto been, an international conflict, an effort to defend not material wealth, but the ideal tendencies of civilization, against materialism erected into a systematic doctrine.

We need not watch for the religious revival, for it has taken place, and those were blind indeed who did not see it. It is true that the Churches, which are to religion what the schools are to knowledge, are asking: "But who—which Church—will profit by this revival?" Just as an advance in knowledge profits all the schools, and shines before all the world, so it will be with the present religious revival: it will profit all the Churches, even all the anti-churches. In drawing nearer to that ideal towards which, by divers paths, we seek to climb, we draw nearer to one another. The religious revival will profit most those who serve it, not those who make use of it.

This religious character of the war against Germany has been felt by all the belligerents; but among you British it has been perceived in all its plenitude. And I shall long remember the engraving published in one of your periodicals, which symbolized the soul of this war by two persons. On one side of the picture was the King of the Belgians, dreaming alone in a ruined house, in the midst of a landscape which revealed, in all directions, nothing but devastated villages, and Wilhelm II suddenly rose before him, and in a tone which he sought to render amiable, asked him: "Then you have lost everything?"—"Yes,

I have lost everything," the King replied, "but I have saved my soul."

All the war is in that. And in the train of King Albert and his people, even though the ruins be heaped up upon our soil as on the soil of Belgium, we shall remain proud and victorious. We also shall save our soul.

ALSACE

CHAPTER IV

ALSACE

Why Frenchmen have so rarely visited the lost provinces since 1870—The unique violence of the tacit protest of Alsace against her invaders—The politicians of the future must make themselves acquainted with Alsace—What they may learn from a pilgrimage thither—After victory the nations of the Entente must be generous to Germany—The German and the Alsatian characters contrasted—Kléber—An unexpected demonstration at Strasbourg Cathedral—The Alsatian is not a rebellious person—The rally to Germany—The pacifist campaign of Mr. Hodgson-Pratt and a remark of M. Petri's—Alsace-Lorraine is an administrative expression—It was supposed by many that the assimilation of Alsace by Germany would be less difficult than that of Lorraine—The military defeat of Germany will lead to the crumbling of the whole system in which she had placed her trust—She is already beaten—The Emperor gives the lie to the evidence.

SOME of my readers, perhaps, will wonder why I have chosen to write of Alsace? For a host of reasons. To begin with, it is natural to speak of what one loves and admires; and for thirty years my love and admiration for Alsace have steadily increased.

I cannot, of course, pretend that I have discovered Alsace, but I have more than once had occasion—without seeking it—to realize how many are those who need to discover her. My countrymen are not without blame in this respect. It is true that there are extenuating circumstances in their favour; it was formerly rather difficult to cross the frontier; and the dealings with the gendarmes or the commissaries of police which a journey in the annexed provinces almost always involved would often repulse those who would otherwise have been most eager to go thither. Then there were other matters, quite trivial things, which affronted the Frenchman who, taking in Paris a ticket for Munich or Vienna, would spend a few hours at Strasbourg, between two trains, in order to visit the cathedral. He could not leave the station without crossing the waiting-hall, where his attention was forcibly attracted by a great fresco representing the Emperor Wilhelm I, saluted, on his arrival, by Alsatian women, who offered him flowers. One need not be a highly accomplished critic to guess at the historical value of official paintings of this kind.

The traveller, anxious for a breath of fresh air, would hasten his pace, to find himself confronted by cab-drivers who did not appear to understand our language. Vexed and weary, he proceeded on

his way afoot, without paying any heed to a highly attentive gendarme who was prepared to make a note of the unfortunate driver who should allow himself to forget that German is the only tongue which may be heard in Alsace.

There are other reasons of a more exalted kind owing to which we French have crossed our eastern frontier less frequently than the others. Doubtless the most real of these reasons was the gnawing regret which the loss of the frontier provinces caused us. The wound persisted and would not heal. We felt not merely materially diminished; we felt that the integrity of our moral strength had suffered, and we avoided Alsace rather as one avoids thinking of sorrows which one cannot appease. Perhaps, too, we regretfully confessed that we had not been able to do what might have been done for oppressed Alsace and its redemption; that we had not lived to set it free, and had often grieved it by the spectacle of our quarrels.

But France did not forget Alsace. She thought of her continually and spoke of her, often too frequently; but she was very badly informed as to what was happening there, for the Press, essentially Parisian, was more anxious to excite the curiosity of its readers than to enable them to judge a situation in all its bearings. For the Press, the sensational event is often one which is devoid

of any importance, but is excellently adapted to divert the attention from questions which deserve to receive consideration. The journal which observes such a policy pleases its hasty readers, flattering their instinct for frivolity, and incessantly repeating what they already know, but it gradually becomes the very opposite of what it ought to be, if it wishes to educate the public mind.

I remember the immense dejection which was caused in Alsace by the articles of certain brilliant publicists who seemed to think they could explore the province in two days, if not in two hours.

It is true that the opinion of the great public—too often modelled on that of the journals which it reads—is not necessarily that of our intellectual and political circles. In these people had a much better idea of what was happening across the new frontier. The number of Alsatians occupying high public positions in France is even to-day very great. But although one encountered, in official circles as elsewhere, an unfailing fidelity to Alsace and to France, one saw nothing of the full reality and energy of the incessant work in preparation for the future which was going on in the lost provinces.

France awaited their restoration; counted on it, perhaps, with too fatuous an optimism, for she had not settled on the programme which she meant

to adopt in order to arrive at this result. In Alsace, on the contrary, after the signature of the Treaty of Frankfort, the whole population, with magnificent solidarity, felt intuitively what must be done, not merely to keep alive the cult of the lost fatherland, but to continue to serve it. Each citizen remained in his place in the ranks of the opposition. No one made the facile error of believing that a protest against Germany was the special business of the politicians; it became the tacit and continual thought of each and all, of women and children no less than men, and one of the most glorious pages of the Alsatian Book of Martyrs will assuredly be that on which are inscribed the names of so many students of the University, collegians of various towns, or village scholars, who were sent to prison for refusing to take part in the Germanic demonstrations imposed by the authorities. And while Germany turned Alsace and Lorraine into a huge entrenched camp, the population of the country districts, no less than that of the towns, continued the spiritual conflict, so that after forty years not only had the policy of Germanization made no progress, but it had morally lost the battle, as was proved by all that happened at the time of the inauguration of the Wissembourg monument, or the "Sabern affair."

The fact is that this vast and unceasing task

was commenced as early as 1870. And without organization, without issuing of orders, without the concoction of plots, it has silently made of the Alsatian people the most highly disciplined, morally speaking, the most conscious of its rights and its inalienable liberty, of any people in Europe. It is a self-possessed people; it has no need to strike attitudes; there is no bravado about it; no shouting of the fact that Germany is not at home in Alsace and never will be. The grim and indomitable determination of Alsace not to rebel uselessly, not to waste her forces in noisy demonstrations, whose only result would have been to afford her gaolers an excuse for severity—this increasing determination to keep herself free in proportion as she was crushed in the vice of Prussian and Germanic *Kultur*, is surely one of the finest spectacles of history, and it is to be hoped that Europe and the world will realize its beauty and give ear to its teaching.

To Bavaria, Saxony, Würtemberg, and all those populations of the Empire which were conquered by Prussia, dragged behind her triumphal car, humiliated, and finally enlisted by her to become the accomplices of her crimes, and which seem to have retained of all their ancient independence only the right to publish a few satirical journals, in which the barbarity of Prussia and the dismal

antics of her militarism are sometimes turned into ridicule—to these dumb and confederate accomplices—dumb first from fear, then from greed and the appetite for booty—to these millions of men, all subordinates, never citizens, Alsace has been the perpetual skeleton at the feast.

What would not Germany have given to break her resistance! She tried all means, even kindness. To be sure, it was a Prussian kindness; that is to say, a provisional kindness which insulted the vanquished: which said to them: "You would have to be most incredibly stupid to believe in my good feeling towards you; still, it is necessary for me, for the impression I want to produce on those who are looking at us, that I should treat you for a moment in a manner which is outwardly decent. When the spectators have scattered you can imagine what you'll get!" The repulse which his good behaviour met with did not trouble the Prussian; in a similar case he would not himself have been deceived; but the repulse of his more high-handed proceedings literally stupefied him, for it was in contradiction to all the theories which he has learned from his generals and professors, his priests and pastors.

It is very true, alas! that Alsace is not the only oppressed country in the world; that many others have been groaning for deliverance for a far

longer time; but it seems to me that it is in Alsace, thanks to the complete development of the German method and the perfecting of her means of action, that the conflict between might and right, between the armed brute and the man supported only by his conscience, has assumed a definiteness unparalleled.

The cause of Alsace, a great and inspiring cause, goes infinitely beyond Alsace. With it stands and falls the cause of all oppressed peoples. If the nations which to-day form the group of the Entente succeed in remaining faithful to their ideal, not only until the moment when Prussian militarism is annihilated, when all Germany is placed beyond the possibility of ever again imperilling civilization, but until the truly critical and perilous moment when the memory of the trials endured, the indignation aroused by crime and the sight of booty shall almost universally give rise to words, desires, and appetites unworthy of the sentiments which have been the spiritual cement of their alliance—if at this moment all these evil suggestions are repulsed, and if the idealistic character of our work should increasingly triumph, the restoration of Alsace to France, that of *Italia irredenta* to Italy, and the independence of Poland will mark the beginning of a new cycle in the political history of the world, in which the

enslavement of nations will very soon become, for all peoples, a thing as unthinkable as the enslavement of negroes, as it was practised barely fifty years ago, is to us to-day.

This is why I wish that after this war all the politicians who are modest enough to believe that they still have something to learn or to comprehend, would make a sort of pilgrimage to Alsace, as to a land consecrated by the moral beauty and the tears of a whole people.

The fidelity of Alsace to France has been so complete and so perfect only because Alsace immediately deprived it of its temporary and secondary aspects. She loved France not for this or that reason of detail; she raised the question to an altitude whither it is not always easy to follow, to the height of eternal principles; she declared that she loved France because she wished to love her, because she had the right to love her, because nothing in the world could part her from that love, because she was her own mistress.

To the Germans, who wished by innumerable arguments to prove to Alsace that she was Germanic by race, that her material interests, her industrial expansion, and the safeguarding of her individuality, all depended on her final adhesion to Germany, she replied, with her long, melancholy gaze: "Of all this I know nothing and wish to

know nothing. Your arguments, even if they were what you say and what you believe, would not move me; they might, of course, convince Germans, but they leave me perfectly indifferent. That is not the question. In the course of the centuries I have won a soul for myself, and that soul is certainly not German. You might perhaps subdue my body, but my soul will never be yours."

And Alsace has kept her word.

Those politicians who might be tempted to borrow some part of the ideas which have assured the past triumphs of Germany, and who will take the trouble to become profoundly acquainted with Alsace, will thereby come to see the importance, invincible in the long run, of the principles of justice; on the other hand, those who, impelled by the natural goodness of their hearts, and a tendency to trust to all the pacific assurances of the Prussians of yesterday, or to those of other nations who would like to imitate them, should imagine that the conflict will be ended by the victory of the Entente, will understand that it is, on the other hand, at this very moment that the difficult task, the spiritual labour, will begin. Germany, once crushed on the field of battle, will need to re-learn everything.

In this task we must give her our brotherly help.

To abandon her to herself on the morrow of peace would be to risk her thinking that her defeat was on this occasion due to an accident, to a sort of stupendous breakdown impossible to foresee, which assuredly would not occur another time. We ought, after peace is concluded, to reflect incessantly on our conspicuous duties towards her, and it is in the cheerful accomplishment of these duties that our respective countries will find the seal of true victory and the final realization of their mission. We must be good to her, but not with that foolish goodness in which the heart thinks itself the victor because it acts alone, dismissing reason and intelligence; we must be good to her, but not with that goodness which is moved to pity by the whinings of professional mendicants, for so we should encourage her to begin again. Ours must be a virile kindness, conscious of the immensity of the task to be accomplished, and the inexpressible beauty of its results. This kindness must lead Germany to understand that her defeat was the perfectly natural and inevitable result of her madness and her blasphemies, and that whenever a people dreams that everything is permitted to it, and that it is enough to have material force on its side, and it may replace the good old morality by a German morality and a German truth, it will, one day or another, inevitably be swept away, as were those Assyrian civilizations

in whose ruins our archæologists discover the traces of an architecture more colossal than that of Berlin.

We shall be kind to the Germans because we should be false to ourselves if we were not. Hatred is a very ugly disease, which we do not wish to contract, for if we were cruel and vindictive we should be renouncing our membership of the future State of justice and liberty for whose foundation we have so cheerfully offered the flower of our youth; but we may be permitted to remark that this kindness will at once receive its first reward. It can scarcely be denied that the fact of having Germany on the right and Turkey on the left has excited, among certain youthful nationalities, a state of mind which is not precisely that which one ought to have at the age of twenty. They must be forgiven much, not because they have loved much, but because they have a big appetite, and because they are not wholly responsible for it. To those dangerous opportunists who would seek to utilize our aid in order to realize plans opposed to our ideals, we must prove, without too much delay, that the word "justice" is not for us a mask which we wear for a moment and then discard, and that if we desire justice for them and for ourselves we also desire it for others, and for all others. Need I add that I am not speaking of any particular

nationality; I am speaking of a danger which threatens all, and us with them.

If I were an Alsatian I could not have spoken with such enthusiasm, for the Alsatians are always modest, reserved, and prudent. Having lived with them, and having become intimately acquainted with the most varied circles, at an age when the affective faculties are at their highest degree of development, I loved them and do now love them, not only as one loves those from whom one has learned much, but as one loves those to whom one owes the joy of life and the joy of endless work, and this above all in hours when it seems that all work may be useless.

They possess in equal degree two robust qualities which are rarely united: an abundant good sense and an unalterable idealism. They are said to be of German race. I wish ardently that this were true, since it would prove the possibility of perfecting and transforming that race. Good sense and idealism are, as a matter of fact, the very two qualities in which the Germans of to-day are most lacking. You will find sufficient proof of this in the appeal of the "Ninety-three Intellectuals," or the letters of Dr. Dryander. That they are, on the other hand, two fundamental qualities of the Alsatians a walk through the villages not far from Strasbourg will suffice to demonstrate. The spire of

the cathedral speaks a very plain language, and the peasants, grave, and, by preference, silent, who till the plain, have eyes that hold, when they light up, gleams of a delightful geniality; gleams which disappear to make way for an indescribable, veiled, intimate expression, which touches and haunts one; the expression of those who have suffered greatly, and who yet desire to live on, to witness the triumph of justice and to aid in that triumph.

I should like to recount a few facts through which, I hope, you will perceive a little of the limpidity, the vigour, the simplicity, the unslaked ardour, and the indomitable perseverance of the Alsatian soul.

Among these instances are some which are like the rites of a regular religion, simple and solemn, which thrill the heart with a poignant emotion: such as the tree of Noël before which the most aged member of the family places the French flag, which after a moment is carefully returned to its hiding-place. I never so fully understood the value of symbols as when I saw the expression which shines in Alsatian eyes at this moment, an expression of grief and love, energy and faith.

A rite of the same kind is the annual homage paid to Kléber by the Alsatian students of the University of Strasbourg. They assemble about the statue, and while the clock of the cathedral

strikes midnight they defile before it with uncovered heads, in an intimate union symbolized by their processional unity.

They pass in silence, but I do not think I am wrong in saying that there was never in the world a more eloquent demonstration than this.

Fifteen years ago I was present at one of those outbursts of restrained emotion which suddenly seize you by the throat and open your eyes to vistas undivined. I felt suddenly homesick for Strasbourg, and I went thither with a ticket for the Ostend-Bâle journey, in order to avoid the difficulties of the eastern frontier. It was the afternoon of the 1st of November, and I went straight from the station to the cathedral, to attend the Vespers of All Saints, and I learned the programme of the ceremony from the beadle. Now if you are to understand the rest of this story you must know that the Vespers of All Saints, a festival of great solemnity, are followed immediately by the Vespers of the Dead, a festival of the following day, which is of less importance. "Monseigneur the Bishop," said the beadle, "will celebrate the Vespers of All Saints in full pontificals; but you know he is a German, and has ordered them to sing the Latin in the German manner. Most unfortunate! We are very much annoyed!" And so saying, he made a sweeping

gesture towards the choir, which seemed to say that not only did he, the faithful old beadle of Strasbourg Cathedral, deplore the episcopal order, but also Monseigneur the coadjutor, the right reverend chapter of canons, M. the archpriest, MM. the vicars, and the choir-boys into the bargain.

However, at the call of the great bell the nave filled with the faithful; they were almost all Alsatians, with here and there groups of Bavarian soldiers. A sharp tap on the flagstones announced the processional entry, and the great organ pealed forth. When all were in their places, the voice of the pontiff rose, clear and sonorous:—

Deous in adioutorioum meoum intende!

There was so much amplitude and imperiousness in this beginning that it seemed as though he meant to carry the matter by assault. But the response: *Domini ad adjouvandoum me festina*, although intoned by a number of choristers, fell on the ear with an indescribably dismal and impotent effect, and the psalms dragged lamentably, with scarcely any participation on the part of the clergy who occupied the stalls.

The ceremony was rapidly accomplished, and, the Vespers of All Saints over, the episcopal train took its way to the sacristy. And then happened

something which I cannot recall even now without emotion. The procession had not yet completely disappeared in the sacristy, when the canon of the week began the Vespers of the Dead, but this time with the French pronunciation. And not only did all the voices of the choir reply, but the congregation sang the psalms with an ardour impossible to describe. The Bavarian soldiers stared at one another, without in the least comprehending what was happening: but the Alsatians too gazed at one another, and saw that nearly all had tears in their eyes. They sang the praises of God, they implored peace for the dead, but above all they were making their plaint to the Eternal, the Omnipotent.

What happened was nothing: yet its moral significance was immense. Perhaps the bishop imagined it to be a revolt against his authority. Perhaps the learned German professors thought the clergy and the faithful of Strasbourg were extremely stupid not to perceive that the German pronunciation of the Latin was far more scientific than the French. That was not the question. The heart had reasons which the reason knew not of. The Alsatians who on that day were in the cathedral had suddenly joined, with a feeling of infinite sorrow and sweetness, in a silent oath of fidelity to their ideal, and for them

the ideal is France. Ah! I know very well that the France which we behold is far from being what Alsace believes her, and I know the France of Alsace is a country of illusion. But in perceiving rather the France that should be than the France that is, Alsace has day by day created the France of the future. She has not only maintained the bonds which attach her to the mother country; she has prepared herself to be, when the moment shall strike, the spiritual counsellor, the elder sister of the other provinces, who, taught by experience, refined by suffering, will know how to make her sisters give ear to her—her sisters, whose gratitude and admiration are her right.

Incidents like that which I have just related have been continually excited by the stupidity and clumsiness of the Germans, with a perseverance for which we can only thank them. Their behaviour has created a cohesion of all the Alsatians, an anti-Germanic unity, which it is difficult to imagine. Belonging to different religious cults, to opposing and often extreme political parties, they all cherish, in the depth of their hearts, an identical but extremely complex feeling toward Germany. It is neither hatred nor anger—these are sudden and fugitive feelings, which are exhausted the more quickly the more violent they have been, and are manifested more

noticeably: no, it is the feeling, not only in this or that particular circle, but throughout all the degrees of the social hierarchy, that in spite of certain outward analogies Alsace and Germany belong to two antithetic civilizations, and that although they may possibly have had the same origin, it was in a very remote past; that the spiritual opposition between them is insuperable, and that Alsace, during the last forty years, has day by day turned her back more completely on all the manners of seeing and thinking and acting which Germany has believed it her duty methodically to adopt, and on which she has staked her glory and her hopes.

The essential impression which Germany produces and wishes to produce is that of force, which is easily understood, since Germany professes that right is based on might. The day when she no longer has might on her side will be the day of her bankruptcy, not only material, but intellectual and moral. Germany has condemned herself to adopt force, or to cease to be. And when I say force, you will understand that I do not mean a force like other forces, a force in proportion to her area and her population, but force itself, by which and for which all other forces must exist. *Deutschland über alles* — that means the military Germany into whose hands scientific

Germany, philosophic Germany, religious Germany, have miserably surrendered themselves. When Raphael sought to sum up the whole of Christian civilization in the chambers of the Vatican, he grouped the army of prophets, saints, and apostles about the Host; about the sacrament which calls all men to a banquet which is the feast of love and equality. Suppose for a moment that Wilhelm II were victorious and wished, according to his habit, to send to Rome a mark of homage which should be both conspicuous and interested. The idea might not impossibly occur to him to order his Imperial Court painter to execute a canvas intended to symbolize the Teutonic civilization, in which we should behold the Emperor leaning on a gigantic Krupp gun, the mouthpiece and organ of Germanic truth, surrounded by the elders of 1870, 1806, and many more besides, who founded the system: but in the first rank would by the "Ninety-three Intellectuals" who finally proclaimed and codified it.

But perhaps Wilhelm II will not have occasion to offer the Pope such a souvenir of victory. The famous manifesto of which I have just spoken may well be the spiritual testament of Germanism. Although Germany is rather hard of hearing, she does seem to have heard a sound of cracking that augurs ill for her.

There is fear in her manner of conducting the war, and the rashness of fear : for on the day she is completely vanquished it will not be her army only that is beaten, but her entire system.

The Prussian regiment, with its deep mass formations, is a perfect machine. The Alsatian is the very antithesis of a piece of machinery. Of all the citizens of Europe he is the most concerned to safeguard his independence. In this respect he is superior to many French electors, who are superficial, though refractory and censorious ; who believe themselves independent because they indulge in a facile criticism of every one and everything ; while the distinctive trait of the spirit of independence in the Alsatian is that it is not a species of egoism nor a means of escaping from political or social duty, but the very contrary. The Alsatian reserves his liberty and strives to see clearly, to examine things for himself, in order that he may the better devote himself to collaboration in the common task. He has a horror of caucuses, by which I mean those groups which demand implicit obedience from their supporters, relieving them of the heavy but virile burden of individual responsibility.

All this must be borne in mind if we are to understand that the opposition to Germanization, far from relenting, has never ceased to increase in

force and volume. The Germans felt this increase of antagonism; but, incapable of allowing for the operation of spiritual forces, they imagined they had to do merely with shadowy conspiracies, and organizations in which French gold must have played a preponderant part; so that year after year the indescribable stupidity of the police measures and repressive regulations reminded the Alsatians what German liberty is like.

But you will say, perhaps: "Is there not a group of Alsatians who have accepted the situation, or who have even become the agents of Germany?"

That the Alsatians were forced to accept the situation you have already seen. Beyond the Vosges, after having for years fêted those who came to settle in France, people have gradually arrived at a better understanding of the situation, and have, on the contrary, urged the Alsatians to remain in their native country, in order thus to maintain the French tradition until the day of deliverance. And the moral authority which M. Maurice Barrès has won in France is based, I believe, merely on the unmistakable manner in which he has popularized this point of view.

The emigration to France, therefore, had very notably diminished, and at the same time it was seen that the individuality of the Alsatian character

was growing more powerful, and its capacities of resistance were continually developing.

But it is impossible to submit without a certain degree of collaboration. To remain in Alsace, for the majority of families, was not only to submit to military service in the German Army for their children; it meant also the acceptance of certain elective duties; it meant the filling of official posts, and the filling of professorial chairs, and it is obvious that once this course was entered upon it was not easy to fix a limit.

During these forty-four years of German rule there were naturally a few who, hypnotized by the apparatus of German force, believed that the restoration of Alsace to France was forever impossible. To what end, they thought, should we persist in rebelling against the inevitable? And since they submitted, they wished to enjoy the full benefit of their submission; they made a show of it, gloried in it. The number of those who have so acted might perhaps be counted on the fingers; as might the number of those who, having confounded science with German science and religion with German religion, in a moment of spiritual aberration became the servants of Germanism. Even among these rare and conspicuous individuals, are there any that never felt homesick for the France on which they had turned their backs? I have no

right to judge their hearts; I cannot plumb their consciences; but I do know that less than two years ago I had a long scientific conversation with one of the signatories of the "Manifesto of the Ninety-three." It never entered my mind to speak to him of politics. How it was that on this occasion our conversation drifted in that direction I no longer remember; but what I do remember is the accent with which, in speaking of Germany and her Alsatian policy, he exclaimed: "Ah, they are mad! It is disgusting! If they wanted to make themselves hated they could not do better!"

Was this an isolated outburst of indignation, or was it not rather the instinctive and uncontrollable revolt of the Alsatian heart? I do not know, but I felt an immense pity for a man who had lost his country, and who, beyond the Rhine, had found not a country but an organization.

I have had occasion to meet several of the more notorious of the *ralliés*. It seems to me that it is through Alsatian zeal—a disputable zeal, no doubt, but not to be ignored—and not through Germanic zeal that they have become what they are; in any case those who wish to appreciate the position equitably should not establish rigid classifications, should not judge people *en masse*, but should on the contrary study each case separately.

Now if we consider the *ralliés*, even the most

conspicuous of them, those who go to Berlin not in defence of Alsace and her rights, but to receive the instructions of the Imperial Government, we are struck with the fact that even these take great care in their family life to preserve the Alsatian individuality, and even the traditions of the French period, as they say in Alsace. They have a very definite idea of the contrast between Germany and Alsace, and of the intellectual, moral, and civic superiority of the latter.

All this is complex and indefinite, like life and reality. But it was necessary to speak of it, in order to show you that if we want to adhere to the reality of things, we must avoid giving a too precise meaning to the term *rallié*.

And here is another example: During the brief reign of the Emperor Frederick III one of your compatriots, the pacifist Hodgson-Pratt, came to Strasbourg, and begged me to put him in touch with Alsatians representing the most various political tendencies. He arrived from Berlin beaming with delight, for he had received assurances which he believed to be decisive, and was persuaded that in a few months the question of Alsace-Lorraine would be solved, and Europe delivered from the nightmare of armed peace.

There was a question of the neutralization and autonomy of Alsace-Lorraine, to be granted by

the Emperor himself. The latter, it appeared, had shown himself thoroughly well disposed towards this proposal, whose realization would have shed an imperishable brilliance over his name.

Yet it was at Strasbourg that the scheme was to miscarry, or rather reveal itself as impossible of realization.

I can see Mr. Hodgson-Pratt now, with the face of an inspired apostle, busy amid a host of Alsatians. There were also, to represent the immigrants, two German professors of the University; but the most important speaker was a highly intelligent *rallié*, who was already on the threshold of a brilliant career. This was M. Emile Petri, advocate and deputy, and to-day, if I am not mistaken, the Imperial Minister of Alsace-Lorraine. His eyes, keen and lively, were fixed upon Mr. Hodgson-Pratt with an expression of admiration for and amazement at a man of a type which to him was so novel. A slightly sceptical smile trembled on his lips, but the line of attention in his forehead revealed his keen desire to realize the proposals of the English pacifist in their least detail, and to understand his plans and his hopes.

However, Mr. Hodgson-Pratt had finished his speech.

He raised his eyes to sweep them over his audience, as though to interrogate them. An

embarrassed and embarrassing silence was the response. Finally, one of those present decided to explain their attitude in a few words: "All this is very fine," he said, "but is it possible? Even if he wished it and were determined, could the Emperor take such a measure? He would have all Germany against him. Reflect—Alsace-Lorraine does not belong to him! It is 'territory of the Empire.' It is the symbol and the pledge of Germany! And then, whether we have autonomy or independence, it must be granted that our country shall possess the right of complete self-administration—and do you not see the cloud of functionaries, Prussians, Hessians, and what not, who have fallen upon us like hungry flies upon meat? Do you believe they would willingly take their departure over the Kehl bridge?"

The discussion was opened. It was long and confused, but the culminating touch, which was also the crumbling of the dream, was added by a pastor of that part of the Vosges which is still illumined by the memory and the example of Jean Frédéric Oberlin. Pastor Dietz of Rothau spoke as follows: "If I have rightly understood, you have employed the words autonomy and independence in their true sense. To your thinking, Alsace-Lorraine, restored to her own hands, would form, with Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Belgium,

one of a barrier of neutral buffer-States. And that would please me better than the present system," he said, with an eloquent gesture. "But what will happen if, the day after Alsace-Lorraine has become her own mistress, has replaced the functionaries who were just now referred to by men of the country—what will happen if the first solemn act of our elective bodies, in an irresistible impulse which would be not a political decision but an act of morality, were to declare our country united to France?"

"But that would mean war!" cried Mr. Hodgson-Pratt, raising his hands to heaven, "and I cannot believe your country would commit such an irreparable imprudence."

Instinctively all turned toward him who seemed of all those present the best qualified to judge what the deputies of Alsace-Lorraine would be likely to do in such a case—toward M. Emile Petri. He made a vague gesture, the gesture of a man who says "I don't know!", because he does not wish to reply. Mr. Hodgson-Pratt appeared to be overwhelmed. He had just experienced what so many other pacifists have experienced in Alsace; there are disputes for whose solution good-will cannot suffice, which call for a decision of full and complete justice.

A few weeks later Frederick III was dying,

and I heard nothing more of the plans of Mr. Hodgson-Pratt.

I have thought it useful to describe this scene so that you might perceive how far the assimilation of Alsace by Germany was, in 1888, an accomplished fact, and what a complete absence of Germanic fervour there was even among those Alsatians who were most closely *ralliés* to Germany.

Some of my readers have no doubt thought it strange that I almost always say Alsace, instead of saying Alsace-Lorraine. This is not only because I know Alsace and not Lorraine; it is also because I wished to protest against the error implied in the expression Alsace-Lorraine. It is an expression created by the Prussian administration, which corresponds to no reality. Alsace and Lorraine are two provinces of widely different character. Sisters in martyrdom, and in fidelity, they have an equal right to our admiration. But Alsace has special merits of her own; as she was a German-speaking province, it was presumed—reasonably enough—that she would find it far less easy than Lorraine to resist the Germanic penetration. But you have seen what an absolute check Germany has received in this respect.

On the morrow of peace, when the two pro-

vinces shall once more find themselves within the frontiers of France, the originality of each will assert itself anew. Lorraine will reveal her joy and her love and admiration of France as she is, even of her most obvious failings, and her children will throw themselves into the parties of the Right or the Left; hers will be the attitude of the woman who literally worships a man, and who does not even dream of entertaining personal ideas of her own.

Alsace, on the other hand, is like a woman who feels herself the equal of her husband: she is admirably devoted and faithful, but she wishes that their union shall have for its goal a common work; and she is capable of speaking seriously, even severely, if it seems to her that the work is languishing.

This work, which imposes itself not only on Alsace and France, but on all the members of the Entente, and even on all those peoples who have understood the lessons of this war, is the struggle against the spirit at present incarnate in Germany. Little Alsace, as you must have seen, if I have succeeded in speaking of her as I should, little Alsace has been for forty-four years not only a country which, like others, has successfully refused to abdicate to the invaders, and

has remained for all men and in spite of all things the citadel of patriotism and fidelity; she has been more: she has been the very heart and mind of Europe and of civilization, for, in addition to promoting the most legitimately egoistical political claims, she has never ceased to defend not only her liberty, but Liberty itself, and those who have eyes to see have beheld in her the strange spectacle of a small country, politically annihilated, which was no longer named even in diplomatic assemblies, yet which determined the whole course of international politics in Europe.

Assuredly the picture which Europe presents at the present moment is terribly sad, with so many millions of men scattered over the battle-fields for the purpose of killing one another: but have you never thought of the spectacle it would present if Alsace, after wearing mourning for her mother-country, had bowed her head, arranged her relics of the French days in her museums, and returned to her business and her pleasures?

Peace, no doubt, would have fallen upon Europe: the German peace; for a generation or two, peace in the fear of Germany; then peace in idleness, cowardice, and forgetfulness!

The pretext for the war was the assassination of an obscure Austrian prince; its true causes,

which were numerous and perhaps unavoidable, so wholly had Prussia lived for war and war alone, are to be sought elsewhere. But I do not think I shall be wrong if I say that the cause which took precedence of all others was the fact that Germany was drawn into the war by Alsace. This looks like a paradox, yet it is true: triumphant Prussia was forced to prove to her peoples the truth of her system—intellectual, moral, scientific, religious, and political—to silence the voice of this little country, which daily showed them that there was some flaw in the Germanic Colossus.

It is truly Alsace which has thus prevented Europe from sinking into the slumber of the German peace. What do we not owe to her—in the first place, we Frenchmen, and secondly you also, our friends and brothers of England? Is not our debt the debt of all the nations?

If the protest of Alsace has proved not only unconquerable, but day by day more powerful, because more conscious of its mission, it is because it had its source amid those heights where hatred no longer has a meaning, where all that is represented by the two syllables *anti* has been discarded, where love becomes the mainspring of our activity.

Therein resides the soul of the resistance of Alsace: this is why, for forty-four years, she

has daily won fresh victories; this is why I return to the idea that the crushing of Germany on the field of battle is in some sort only a preface to the actual conflict: it is the weeding that must follow the sowing of seed. Let us then uplift our hearts to the height of these future duties, for by thinking of them already we shall make our task for to-day more plain and our efforts less difficult.

Let us not be downhearted: on the day when Germany is conquered, when she perceives that the munitions which she has heaped up with such vast prodigality have not been sufficient to save her, the downfall will be immense, for there will be a material rout, followed by a spiritual collapse. The defeat of Germany—in 1916 or later—will be the reverse of the defeat of Alsace in 1870; for Alsace had placed her faith and her hopes in ideas that the Krupp guns could not shatter, for which reason Alsace grew to a greater stature in her defeat, and because of her defeat.

Germany, on the contrary, having placed her faith and her hopes in the sword, so noisily sharpened every morning, and in "keeping her powder dry," will become, when the sword shall be shattered and the powder burned, a human waif, terrified by her shipwreck; and, left without provision by her philosophers, her scientists, her

soldiers, and her Emperor, she will inspire with pity even those whom she lately threatened with her ferocity.

And then we must draw near, with precaution, tactfully, with love, to discover whether we cannot, after the lamentable death of the famous German soul, discover in the vanquished a trace of the human soul.

You will not, I think, be astonished to hear me speak of love while almost on every hand there are ruins attesting the German conception of civilization, and while the Zeppelins are still taking their diversions above defenceless cities. Our enemies are without faith and without law; they are trying to terrorize the world. Let us leave hatred, that ill counsellor, to them; hatred, that apparent force which is only weakness, and which would make us their pupils if under the pretext of avenging ourselves we were to permit it entrance into our hearts.

And now, at the moment of taking leave of you, my readers, I am possessed by an indefinable feeling of uneasiness, when I think of the precious hours we have spent together, in which I have been able to offer you only a disjointed mass of reflections.

Yet the reality which we behold, in which we are living, is not confused. Never, perhaps, did

any crisis of history display such unity, a soul so completely defined. This crisis, which we are forced to call war, is yet something else, and something very much more; it is the clash of two civilizations, which is shaking the world; or rather the mustering of all the forces of evil against idealism. On the one hand there is light, on the other darkness: on the one hand life, on the other death. Ah, I know very well that some timid spirits will cry: "Our enemies can say the same!" I know that, and I will only reply that the apparent equity of my critics is at bottom simply a denial of good and evil and of the gulf that divides them. It is a whim that may be excused in a drawing-room, but when one finds oneself between two opposing armies this apparent wisdom is merely an admission of cowardice and folly.

The path which we still have to travel is one of sacrifices whose extent we cannot imagine; but an instinct which lay slumbering in the depths of our hearts has awakened: it is the instinct of martyrdom. Each grief accepted brings us a spiritual joy, a sense of progress which is not ours alone, but in a certain degree the progress of all men, our brothers. From the first moment, without feverish haste or factitious enthusiasm, we felt that we were safe; we felt that we were the victors.

The vanquished was Germany, and the appeal of her "Ninety-three Intellectuals," which, unhappily for her, does really represent the highest expression of what she is, what she thinks, and what she is worth, was the most categorical and the most conspicuous admission that could possibly be desired of her defeat.

But Germany has suffered a defeat yet more irremediable, and it was inflicted by her Emperor, when, some weeks ago, distracted by the weight of responsibility which weighed upon him, denying the evidence of facts, he dared to utter to the world these words: "Before God and history, I swear that my conscience is clear: I did not desire this war!"

PUBLIC FEELING IN FRANCE

CHAPTER V

PUBLIC FEELING IN FRANCE

By Camille Jullian
(*Member of the Institute*)

The present war is like none of its predecessors—France herself is threatened—Those who knew Germany realized the terrible danger—No one dared think of defeat—All Frenchmen were at one in understanding what the war meant and in the readiness to defend civilization—A new France—Revival of the antique virtues—The sense of national duty—The religion of patriotism—Peace between the cults—The class war suspended—The unexpected solidarity of all France in face of the enemy—Political enmities extinguished—Constancy and confidence—The resignation of constancy—The ceremony of July 14, 1915—Constancy, confidence, and union—The war must last until absolute victory is achieved—the victory that will secure the ancient inheritance of France.

THE present war is for the French a war of defence, a war of independence, a war of salvation. It is like no war that has preceded it. In 1870 the enemy coveted our frontier provinces; in 1815 he was fighting the French sovereign; in 1792 he distrusted our Revolution. To-day our

rulers and our form of government are indifferent to him; and it would take more than a few material gains to content him. It is France herself that is threatened to-day: the national domain, the body of the people, the soul of the country. Imagine her conquered: Germany would arrogate the right to seize our territories, to invade our markets, to limit our right of speech, and her scholars would amuse themselves by making a travesty of our history. By the preparations which she made under cover of peace we may judge of what she would have done in the event of victory.

All those who knew Germany realized, from the first day of the war, the terrible danger in which we stood. One August evening a few friends of mine had met together for conversation and reflection. One of us, for one brief minute, considered the possibility of defeat. "And then," he said, "that would be the end." We all silently agreed. The end of France?—the end of us, personally? our physical extinction, or a humiliation worse than death? None of us dared to be more precise: but a shudder of pious horror passed through us.

All Frenchmen, a year ago, foresaw the same perils and felt the same anguish. The humblest, the most ignorant, at the moment of the call to arms, understood the situation as lucidly as the most clear-sighted of their leaders. And they understood

it independently. It is perhaps the most wonderful fact in the history of the present day that the truth should have been revealed, instantly and without effort, to every Gallic mind, as by a flash of unconquerable radiance. Peasants and artisans, merchants and scholars, all saw that an implacable enemy was about to seize upon their fields, their implements, their homes, their very thoughts; and was about to destroy France by the rape of all these good and beautiful things. There was no need to explain to any of them that France never sought this war; no one dreamed of saying of this war, as has been said of all other wars, that it was the work of a ruler or the business of a party; and after twelve months of suffering the sole conception of the war is this, that it is Germany's war, desired by her, and directed against all France and all Frenchmen, the poorest as well as the richest.

Each one of us, in his inner conscience, has assumed the responsibility for our resistance, and has accepted the fact of community and solidarity with his companions in conflict and in mourning. From such thoughts and resolutions are derived our feelings at the present moment, and the element of moral worth which France has longed to exhibit to the world. Attacked in her body and her members, provoked as a nation and as a mother-country, she has invoked all that could fortify her

body and knit her members together; she has risen as a nation, and has ripened as a mother-country. If we examine the events which we have witnessed during this past year, we find that they lead us, in the last analysis, to the principle of patriotism.

For this reason nothing in the history of France has ever resembled the days through which we are living. The situation is new. France herself is a new France. Not even the France of Valmy can be compared with our France. Behind the armies of those days men heard the angry growling of the political parties. Behind our armies to-day—armies of soldiers—there are only other armies, armies of civilians who support and complete the work of the battles at the front. Those who, being old or infirm, cannot by the effort of their arms free our soil from the defilement of the enemy are seeking by the effort of their thoughts to free our mind from Germanic defects, to free our soul from impatience and weakness. From the child whom I hear spelling out the name of France to the grandfather who utters the word "victory" with his dying breath, all of us, each according to his capacities, wish to fight and do fight. Nothing of the kind was ever seen in our country.

To observe a similar situation we must look back into a past not ours; a past in which, in hours of danger, gods and men, hearts and bodies

drew together and communed together in the name of the fatherland; we must consider Rome after Cannæ and Athens before Salamis. And it will be the new glory of France that she was able, as a nation, to recover and rejuvenate the virtues of the States of antiquity.

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The predominant feeling has been the sense of national duty. It matters not that in some their faith in God has surrounded this duty with comfortable hopes or definite promises, that in others a social idea has illumined and almost irradiated their obedience to this duty, that these have thought to suffer for the future of mankind, while those have felt themselves happy in rejoining Christ; all have seen that belief and piety, before such a peril, become confounded and are merged in the national duty; and this duty has acted on their minds as a religious principle.

And so no religion has profited by this war at the expense of others. Yet all have achieved growth, because they have accepted the alliance of that religion which has the power of reconciling all of them—the religion of the native land. These words, which used to be spoken too infrequently, now dominate all others.

I will not deny that there may have been, here

and there, hasty acts of sectarian propaganda or petty persecutions of innocent ceremonies. But such things happened principally in the fever of the outbreak, when we had not yet had time to shake off ancient habits. Since then many events have reminded us that the cults have gained in nobility what they have lost in intemperance.

We have seen Protestants managing hospitals served by Sisters, and the latter were delighted to be so managed. One of the most beautiful letters which has been written at the front was that of a Calvinist pastor, describing the emotion which he experienced on attending a Mass in the trenches. The *Pélerin* has published some admirable articles. We have read of the episode of a Jewish rabbi who risked his life to carry a crucifix to a wounded and dying man. And the benediction of the Catholic priest, perhaps the most touching of Christian gestures, has fallen, with no distinction of sects, upon all the brothers of the field of battle.

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How remote from us, now, seems that war of classes, which, if there were not such a thing as German Imperialism, would be the foulest wrong which man has ever wreaked upon humanity! It was surely merely a freak of yours—you who

are fighting so well to-day—to declare so often: "My enemy is the *bourgeois* across the road, whom I see every day, not the Pomeranian whom I shall never see." You have seen the Pomeranian now, and you have struck him down without mercy. And at the same time you have raised the *bourgeois* wounded at your side to lead him to the nearest ambulance.

Tell me—has not war taught you that all classes are capable of every kind of courage and of virtue, as peace, I hope, will teach you that they are accessible to every worker? How many young officers have fallen beside you, trained in the great colleges, who forgot their talk of glory and their dreams of love to love only their men, to seek nothing but danger! This officer who has just died would gladly prolong his vigil under the narrow sky of the trenches, in order that his men might enjoy a longer sleep; and you had confidence in him. When he disappeared for ever the rough labourer and the sceptical artisan knew once again those pure and youthful tears of childhood that are like a prayer.

Joseph Déchelette, more than fifty years of age, happy in his wealth, his home, his work, and his reputation, insisted at all costs on taking command of a company. He was killed in his first charge. And the most touching proofs of admiration

which his family received came from the humblest and the most illiterate of his men.

Another soldier, yet living, is a simple Zouave, the son of a very small farmer. He fought at Lizerne, at Souchez, everywhere where good blows were to be struck in a joyous impulse of the human body. Once he came near to remaining on the field: for he and his comrades were charging so swiftly that our guns had not at first sufficient time to lengthen their range. "But," the brave fellow wrote, "none of us dreamed of feeling resentful—*à s'en formaliser*"; a curious, vigorous phrase, in which he accepts and excuses the involuntary imprudence of his comrades the gunners, at the very moment when he was running the greatest danger. His ingenuous letters are often lacking in their orthography, but what simplicity they betray in their greatness of soul! Of the old scholar who receives them and him who despatches them, it is the former who is the pupil, and under an obligation, learning from the little Zouave how one should live, think, and write.

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This collaboration of all cults, all classes, and all ages—this fraternity of action, uniting the most dissimilar persons, was all the more unexpected and remarkable because it is of the

nature of this war to subject to a continual test a man's capacity for good fellowship and social discipline.

In a brief campaign, full of vicissitudes, ending quickly in victory and conquest, it is natural that the citizens of a State should forget their passions and their grudges in the emotion of a great transformation and the sharing of booty, and the content of each facilitates the understanding of all.

But the present war has been and must be a very long and slow-moving campaign. Months have passed without any event of importance, without any new peril, without any notable cause of rejoicing. The war has assumed the character of a collective occupation.

From this languor, this monotony, there might have resulted worse dangers to France than the perils of the front. The absence of news results in an excess of garrulity. Want of occupation blunts the edge of the will, the force of effort, and old habits are automatically revived; and these, in France, mean party intrigues, political quarrels, a desire to be talked of, jealousy among leaders, recrimination and plotting—all the false coin of public life. And I am afraid that from time to time the dishonest merchants of the forum have sought to pass it into circulation, under cover of the war's delays.

But—and this is the second marvel of our contemporary history—the country no longer puts its trust in these dealers in political merchandise. It does not give ear to them. If they succeeded in making themselves heard the replies vouchsafed them would be brief and merciless. All attempts on their part to return to their usual practices, to market their former promises, would result in their irremediable unpopularity. The nation, at the outset and of its own accord, renounced the character which had been imprinted on its public life, and has, by its attitude, reduced to silence those who for so many years have inoculated it with the poison of distrust or enfeebled it by change.

As it has clearly comprehended the situation, so it has plainly perceived the remedies. It has adapted its soul to the nature of war. The war will at first be uncertain, and afterwards long drawn out: well then, we must have confidence! The war will be a long, very long campaign; very well, we must be constant! And these two virtues of the ancient States, constancy and confidence, will be immediately reborn in our midst.

* * * * *

By confidence I mean confidence in the future and confidence in our leaders.

No one, I fancy, has dared to believe in the possibility of final defeat. I except a few compounders of inauspicious rumours: I am speaking of the soldier who has been fighting and the citizen who has been working. When the *communiqués* threw us back so swiftly from the Sambre to the Marne, we did not turn pale over our maps or waste our time in fruitless despair; we simply said: "Something is being prepared: all is well." When that "something" eventuated we did not struggle to arouse ourselves from a nightmare, for we did not fall asleep in a state of despondency or illusion; and our joy was so calm that it almost resembled the waiting of the preceding days. This confidence in the destinies of France imposed itself upon us as an act of faith, racial and religious, as simple and as natural as the confidence of a child in the mother who leads it.

And it is this confidence which at the present moment prevents our dwelling on the idea of peace; I mean the peace not born of victory, which would not restore us all our property and our full security, which would not realize all our legitimate hopes. If there are those among us who have spoken of another sort of peace I am sorry for them, though after all they have injured none but themselves.—One day last winter I received a letter from Holland urging me to consider the question

of peace. As a matter of experiment I showed it to Frenchmen of all conditions and all ages; to those who had the most to lose and to those who had lost the most. These smiled sadly; those were vexed; all showed that as yet they did not understand the meaning of the word "peace." They had confidence; they believed in the destiny of France.

The other kind of confidence refers to our leaders. I will speak plainly, as though I were speaking of Rome or Athens.

The confidence which all of us, whether soldiers or civilians, have reposed in our great military chief is one of the most remarkable and admirable phenomena of the times. It is justified, without a doubt, by his great professional worth and his high moral dignity. But his superiority was by no means known to all at the outset of the war, yet already this confidence was born. It came into being in the first place because it was felt to be necessary: and then because our country, for more than fifty years, had been fed upon criticism, distrust, and lack of discipline; so that it longed to feel a reaction, a sudden rush of good sense; to change its mental attitude, and to replace the suspicion which ruins by the confidence which saves.

Now it has discovered that its leader deserved this confidence. And when it was seen that he

knew how to command, how joyfully his men proved that they knew how to obey!

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Confidence is a state of mind, a matter of thought. Constancy is a state of the will, a matter of action.

Constancy, firmness of mind (which the ancients, remember, placed in the first rank of the virtues), holds fast to its purpose, whatever may befall; perseveres in its design or its duty; never flinches on the field of battle; never fails in the tasks of civil life, and throws through all its actions the continuous woof of an unchanging will, which no accident has power to break.

Of this virtue also France has afforded many examples, and examples of very different kinds.

The crowds on the day of mobilization behaved magnificently; for a crowd may behave well in a public place, just as a battalion may behave well in the fighting line. In that solemn moment we saw the storm of the summons pass over them, yet not a cry was heard, not a head was bowed; only in some a quiver of the eyelids, as when the dust rides upon the wind. The multitude hastened to the railway stations, but there were no collisions, no complaints; it was a spectacle of collective dignity which taught me more and moved me

more than all the books written upon the past and all the scenes of history.

A masterpiece of constancy was the attitude of the soldier who, retreating from the bank of the Ardennaise river to Vitry-le-François, defeated on the first day, and then twice victorious, yet retiring to order, finally standing fast, to fall wounded, but still victorious, and this time for good. I am speaking of a soldier who told me the whole story; a soldier who has a name, but who is as like as a brother to hundreds of thousands of other soldiers.

Constancy, again, explains the resignation with which our armies have accepted the life of the trenches. It was not congenial to the French soldier, an open-air soldier, as was his Gaulish ancestor. But he adopted it, sadly at first, then almost gaily, and always bravely. And I am not sure whether Valerius Maximus has not cited some story of this kind as an example of military constancy.

It is a virtue of the same order that has been exhibited by so many of our friends in town and country. I should have liked to name them, for they were our masters in the matter of moral duty, and they have succeeded in lighting up these long months of mourning by the beauty of their actions. This peasant has just harvested, without a word of lamentation, the field which was sown by his dead son. This mother, on receiving the news that her

son was killed, went forth to console the wounded who yet lived. This schoolmaster in a bombarded city quietly retired, during the menace of the shells, to a cellar turned into a schoolroom, where he was joined by a flock of still joyous children. This famous professor lost the last son remaining to him, and on receiving the telegram he slowly took his chair to dictate to his pupils the tasks of the day. And we might cite a thousand facts of the kind.

A very brief and simple scene or spectacle will often serve as the expression and the symbol of the unanimous constancy of a whole people. Such was the ceremony which took place in Paris on the 14th July 1915, the most harmonious known to our national history. Over that collected crowd, extending from the Arc de Triomphe to the Invalides, was the sense of the nearness of the enemy, and the rhythmical flight of the French aeroplanes recalled the dangers close at hand; and then, before that host, standing beneath our first trophies of victory, near the tombs of our great dead, the head of the State, in simple words, proclaimed the nation's oath of war upon the enemy, the union of all our wills, and our confidence in the justice of Destiny.

* * * * *

Constancy, confidence, and union—it is in these that we must persevere. Any weakening of one of

these virtues would be a diminution of that inheritance of moral glory which the year has just given to France. Our country has lost some of the best of its sons; let it piously persevere in the beauties which they have created for it, which they have bequeathed to it as a memorial of their passage through life.

The better to guard this heritage, let each keep a watch upon his words and his thoughts, and encourage those about him. Let us avoid, as an offence against our country, as a sin against our dead, all gestures of impatience, all moments of idleness. The war may last long; no one knows how long it will last. But it must last until the day of absolute and integral victory, for France must be sure of living intact and free, must be sure that the fire shall burn undimmed upon her hearths, that her factories shall labour in abundance and her soil produce in joy. A work of this grandeur, which must endure through the centuries, demands efforts such as no other nation has ever put forth. Let us make these efforts. The period of the war matters little beside the eternity of victory.

This victory let us await in confidence. Let us bring it nearer by our constancy and our good understanding. And if it be delayed by some few days, let us apply ourselves, on every one of these days, to increasing the moral worth of France.

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